

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية مستقلة تصدر عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية "الراي"

King receives condolences from Argentinian president

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Wednesday received the daughter of Argentinian President Carlos Menem, Zulema Maria Even Menem, who offered condolences to the King and HRH Princess Rania on the passing away of King Hussein. King Abdullah and Princess Rania expressed appreciation for the gesture of Menem and his daughter and sent greetings and wishes of progress and prosperity to the Argentinian people. Menem visited King Hussein's grave, where she placed a wreath of flowers. Also attending the meeting were Argentinian Ambassador to Jordan Juan Antonio Pardo and Argentinian Ambassador to the U.N. Fernando Penella. Also yesterday, King Abdullah received a number of Lebanese sports club presidents, who offered their condolences.

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Price: Jordan 200 Fils

Israel lifts closure on Palestinian areas

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israel announced it would lift a four-day closure on the Palestinian territories Wednesday that was imposed amid warnings of attacks by Islamists during the Jewish holiday of Purim. An Israeli army statement said the closure would end Wednesday at midnight. Israeli Jews celebrated the festival of Purim this week, a holiday marked by violence since 1994 when a Jewish settler gunned down 29 Palestinian worshippers before being bludgeoned to death by survivors.

Britain outlaws two Protestant groups

BELFAST (AP) — The British government is outlawing two anti-Catholic terror groups that sprang up in defiance of the Belfast peace accord. Wednesday's announcement by Northern Ireland Secretary Mo Mowlam followed a string of crude bomb and grenade attacks on Catholics claimed by the two shadowy groups, the Orange Volunteers and Red Hand Defenders. Mowlam said the decision to make both groups illegal as of midnight (0000GMT) means it will become a criminal offence to belong to either group, or to solicit funds or material support for their activities. In the same announcement, Mowlam also opened the door for the Irish National Liberation Army or INLA, a small anti-British gang that called a cease-fire last August, to benefit from the peace deal.

Chechenya bank official kidnapped

GROZNY (AFP) — Gunmen kidnapped the vice-president of the National Bank of Chechenya in Grozny on Wednesday. Deputy Premier Turpal Ali Aggeriyev said. Armed men seized Adlan Barzunukayev from his car as he was going to work, firing several shots in the process and wounding the bank official's driver. Aggeriyev said. Hostage-taking became widespread in Chechenya after the 1994-96 war of secession from Russia left the republic devastated, lawless and awash with arms. A total of 189 people were kidnapped during 1998, 118 of whom were freed. Eight hostages were killed, including three Britons and a New Zealander.

Right-wing paper editor beaten in Russia

MOSCOW (AFP) — The chief editor of the anti-Semitic newspaper "Zavtra," Alexander Prokhanov, was beaten on Monday evening near his home by two unknown assailants, media reports said Wednesday. It was the second time in about a year that Prokhanov has been assaulted. Police are investigating the latest incident. Itar-Tass reported.

Canadian police raid official's home in gambling probe

VANCOUVER (AP) — Royal Canadian Mounted Police officers raided the home of British Columbia's premier in an investigation related to gambling at a hotel near Vancouver. Members of the RCMP Commercial Crime Division, equipped with a search warrant, raided Glen Clark's east Vancouver home Tuesday evening. It was not immediately disclosed whether anything was seized at the premier's home but he was cooperating with police, said Geoff Meggs, a spokesman for Clark.

Khatib says Jordanian-Kuwaiti relations 'back on track'

Jordanian embassy in Kuwait officially reopens

By Caroline Faraj

KUWAIT CITY — Jordan reopened its embassy here yesterday, officially marking the resumption of normal bilateral ties between the two countries after an eight-year strain stemming from the 1990-91 Gulf crisis.

Foreign Minister Abdul Ilah Khatib, who arrived in Kuwait on Tuesday and met with several senior officials, Wednesday hoisted the Jordanian flag at the embassy's temporary premises at Al Safir Hotel, a senior official told the Jordan Times.

"I can say that Jordanian-Kuwaiti relations are back on track, and prospects for developing these ties in all aspects are wide open," Khatib told the Jordanian press before leaving Kuwait at the end of his two-day trip, which he described as "very positive."

Khatib, who was invited by his Kuwaiti counterpart Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah, Tuesday met with Kuwaiti Emir Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sabah and Crown Prince and Prime Minister Sheikh Sa'd Al Abdullah Al Sabah.

Responding Tuesday to an invitation from Khatib, the Kuwaiti foreign minister said that he hoped to visit Jordan "very soon."

Mohammad Manfi was appointed Jordan's new chargé d'affaires in Kuwait. Both countries are expected to exchange ambassadors shortly.

Also Wednesday, Khatib visited the Kuwaiti parliament, where some deputies, including Speaker Ahmad Saadoun, have continued to voice opposition to their government's decision to resume relations with Jordan.

Khatib held talks with acting Speaker Talal Al Ayar and members of the parliament's



Foreign Minister Abdul Ilah Khatib attends a ceremony Wednesday in Kuwait City for the reopening of Jordan's embassy (AFP photo)

foreign affairs committee. According to Ayar, Saadoun had previous commitments to be in Qatar.

"We had a very frank discussion about ways to develop relations between Jordan and Kuwait and the role of parliamentarians in improving ties," Khatib said.

Commenting on reticence to re-establish warm ties with Jordan, Al Ayar said: "I think that there are still bitter voices from some members of parliament on both sides, but there is now better understanding of Jordan's position."

Khatib agreed, saying "I think Jordan's position is well appreciated and understood in Kuwait. I also think the vast

majority of both Kuwaitis and Jordanians are in favour of developing relations between the two countries."

Following Khatib's meeting on Wednesday with leading Kuwaiti journalists and chief editors, Al Siyassah Chief Editor Ahmad Jarallah said, "Kuwaitis in general view the resumption of the relations as a welcome development and one that is beneficial to both sides."

A committee representing the families of Kuwaiti prisoners of war visited Khatib yesterday and asked him to convey an urgent message to all Jordanians to continue their efforts to seek the release of all Kuwaitis held in Iraq.

"We would like to express our sincere thanks to all the efforts that Jordan has offered in order to help in focusing on our just, unfortunate and humanitarian case," the head of the committee, Abdul Aziz Mashari, said.

"We believe that Jordan can continue its efforts in helping us in mediating the release of the prisoners from Iraq," he added.

In response Khatib said, "I have expressed our readiness to offer support to the families of the POWs at different forums."

Khatib was seen off at the airport by Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah and several senior Kuwaiti officials.

Court seeks tougher sentence against man convicted of selling children

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — The Court of Cassation has asked the Court of Appeals to pass a tougher sentence against a former honorary consul of Sri Lanka to Jordan who was convicted last year of forging official documents and baby trafficking, judicial sources said Wednesday.

Tawfiq Abu Khajil, 58, was also convicted in September 1998 by the Court of Appeals of abusing his post and was sentenced to two-and-a-half years in prison.

"The Court of Cassation returned the case to the Appeals Court, asking it to reconsider its previous sentence and to lengthen the sentence against

Abu Khajil," a judicial source, who preferred anonymity, told the Jordan Times on Wednesday.

The Court of Appeals, in its September 1998 verdict, also upheld Abu Khajil's earlier acquittal on over 80 charges brought against him by the Amman prosecutor general.

Abu Khajil, who was freed on JD20,000 bail in April 1997, was arrested shortly after airport police stopped a Dutch couple who were leaving the country on March 13, 1996 with a child they had adopted after paying a sum of \$8,000. The authorities found forged documents with the couple.

He was charged with 26 counts of forging documents and using forged documents,

36 counts of infant trafficking, possession of unlicensed firearms, importation of an illegal wireless radio, abuse of office and forgery of a government seal.

Almost a year later, the Court of First Instance convicted Abu Khajil of selling a baby, attempting to sell another and of forgery of official documents and sentenced him to three years in prison with hard labour.

His attorneys appealed the ruling to the Court of Appeals, which in July 1997 acquitted Abu Khajil of charges of selling one baby and attempting to sell another.

At that time, the court ruled that "no proof existed that the former consul bought or sold any child; rather, what hap-

pened was an adoption authorised by Jordanian and Dutch laws."

The Court of Appeals then also commuted the forgery charges to a misdemeanor, ruling that Abu Khajil did not forge official documents.

The prosecution appealed the ruling to the Court of Cassation which in December 1997 overturned the Court of Appeals ruling on the grounds that a 1929 law banning slavery prohibited the sale of babies.

The court ruled that the law also included provisions that banned any practice that could undermine human freedom whether through treatment of humans as slaves, their deportation or their holding as hostages.

Jordan, IMF agree on new three-year reform programme

By Ghadeer Taher

AMMAN — Jordan and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have wrapped up an agreement on a three-year reform programme. Finance Minister Michel Mario said Wednesday.

The reform package, which is underpinned by an estimated \$150 million a year in IMF financing, is expected to receive final approval from the fund's board and the government later this month.

"We have finalised our discussions with the IMF," Mario told the Jordan Times. "It is the key to borrowing from the international community and rescheduling our debts with the Paris Club and other creditors."

The package conditions hundreds of millions of dollars in aid to economic reforms, including trade and tax reforms and tariff reductions, as well as tight fiscal restraint.

Last year, the budget deficit grew to nearly 10 per cent, well above the IMF-set target of 3.5 per cent. That and a sharp slowdown in economic growth forced Jordan to extend a 10-year programme with the fund, which ended last month. Jordan and the IMF have agreed to a seven per cent budget deficit for this year.

"The seven per cent target will give support to the dinar and help build our foreign exchange reserves. It will make the government less reliant on borrowing from the banking system and also will not crowd out the private sector," Mario was quoted by Reuters as saying Wednesday. "Meeting the deficit target

and the build-up of reserves will help to lower interest rates and so encourage further investment and growth," he said.

The agreement should help facilitate the mix of debt rescheduling and write-offs Jordan has hoped for following the massive show of support for His Majesty King Abdullah by world leaders who attended King Hussein's funeral last month.

"As a result of this programme there will be higher growth, which will lower unemployment and reduce poverty by increasing investments and exports," Mario told Reuters in an interview.

The IMF's programme will help pave the way for Jordan to reschedule its debt — some \$6.8 billion — with the Paris Club. Debt servicing, a major burden for the Kingdom, will top \$800 million this year from an estimated \$500 million last year.

Some assurances of support have already translated into concrete pledges. The Clinton administration has asked Congress to provide an additional \$300 million in military and economic aid on top of an earlier \$225 million pledge this year.

U.S. Under Secretary for Economic Affairs Stuart Eizenstat, here on a two-day visit, Wednesday said the U.S. administration will support the "substantial rescheduling of Jordan's obligations at the Paris Club" and that it was consulting with key allies to mobilise additional support.

Despite the overwhelming pledges of support for the new King, Jordanians remain con-

cerned about prospects for growth in the recession-hit economy. The economy, which is forecast to register three per cent growth in 1999, has suffered for a decade from drastic contraction of trade with Iraq and the loss of critical remittances from expatriate workers who returned from Kuwait and Saudi Arabia during the Gulf crisis.

Economic sanctions and low oil prices have cut exports to Iraq, Jordan's biggest trading partner, to \$200 million this year, \$35 million less than in 1998. Jordan has also been frustrated by Israel's reluctance to open up the West Bank to Jordanian exports, which totalled less than \$25 million last year.

A Jordanian economic team recently returned from Saudi Arabia, which pledged strong support for the Kingdom after the death of King Hussein. It is not yet clear what Riyadh, itself grappling with economic woes as oil prices remain near all time lows, can offer Jordan.

Officials are hopeful that Riyadh will soon open its markets to Jordanian manpower and produce and that the Saudi Development Fund will again extend loans to the Kingdom, especially for much-needed programmes in the social productivity package, which targets lower income groups.

The fund froze its lending to the Kingdom after Jordan's perceived backing of Iraq in the Gulf War.

The United Arab Emirates Tuesday made a \$150 million long-term deposit in the Central Bank of Jordan to bolster the Kingdom's foreign currency reserves.

U.S. urging Israel to facilitate trade between Jordan, Palestine — official Level of exports to PNA areas 'unacceptably low'

AMMAN (J.T.) — A senior U.S. economic official yesterday said the American administration was urging Israel to "promptly" facilitate trade between Jordan and the West Bank and indicated that he expected to see concrete developments in trade issues very soon.

U.S. Under Secretary of State for Economic, Business and Agricultural Affairs Stuart Eizenstat, who is paying a two-day visit to Jordan, told reporters yesterday that "Jordanian trade with Israel and the West Bank and Gaza is also imperative to Jordan's economic growth."

"We have urged that this market be open to Jordanian products and have personally brought that message to Israel and to the Palestinians in my meetings earlier this week," Eizenstat said. "We have encouraged Israel to promptly implement the expansion of the A1/A2 lists which will per-

mit over 1,200 Jordanian items into the West Bank and Gaza."

Eizenstat said he had also urged Israel to expand the point-to-point delivery for Jordan to the West Bank.

"I hope this will occur promptly," he said.

He said Jordan's \$25 million in exports to the Palestinian areas was an "unacceptably low" figure compared to Israel's exports of well over a billion dollars annually, particularly in light of Jordan's reduced trade protocol with Israel. The protocol was reduced this year by \$55 million.

"It is critically important that that amount be made up, and Israel has a role to play," he said.

Eizenstat added that he believes "the Israeli government now understands that it is in their interest as well as in the interest of the Jordanian people to have a stronger trade relationship between Jordan and the West Bank."

The under secretary today will meet Israeli Minister of Trade Natan Sharansky. Eizenstat said he will meet him with a "renewed sense of urgency to implement the expansion of the A1/A2 lists, which will include about 1,200 additional items and to increase point-to-point delivery."

The point-to-point delivery system was agreed on during a meeting between Jordanian and Israeli trade officials last November as a compromise to Jordan's demands that trade between Jordan and the PNA be door-to-door, rather than back-to-back.

"I was told by [Israeli officials] that shortly there will be three drop-off points, not just one, in the West Bank that will facilitate Jordanian truck traffic into the West Bank," Eizenstat said. "This will help expand traffic and trade."

(Continued on page 2)

Netanyahu, Labour reject Sharon call to delay polls, quit Lebanon

TEL AVIV (AFP) — The Lebanon conflict sowed divisions in Israel's right-wing government Wednesday after Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon issued a surprise call to delay May elections and form an emergency unity government to pull the Israeli army from south Lebanon.

The proposal was quickly rejected by both Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the Labour opposition, which described the initiative as an "election gimmick" raised in desperation to match its plan for ending Israel's 21-year military presence in Lebanon.

"The election should not be postponed," Netanyahu, head of the right-wing Likud Party, said on Israeli

army radio. "We want to leave Lebanon, but we have to make sure that Lebanon doesn't come to us," he said, echoing his argument that a unilateral withdrawal from Israeli-occupied south Lebanon would leave northern Israel vulnerable to attack by Islamist and Palestinian guerrillas.

Defence Minister Moshe Arens also dismissed Sharon's proposal, saying it was "not technically feasible."

Arens said instead that Israel should reconsider its tactics in Lebanon and notably consider abandoning a three-year-old truce agreement barring attacks on civilian targets.

He said the accords "tie the army's hands and... provide a large degree of immunity to Hizbollah," the main movement fighting Israel's occupation.

In a series of interviews, Sharon said the country could not allow the mounting losses in Israel's occupied zone in south Lebanon or the deadlock in the peace process with the Palestinians to continue for months until a new government can be formed following the elections.

"We need to set up an emergency government immediately, headed by Likud and Labour, to reach a decision on unilateral withdrawal from Lebanon and on implementing [peace] agreements with the Palesti-

nians," he said.

Sharon, a hawk who led Israel into its 1982 invasion of Lebanon, has called in the past for a phased withdrawal from the buffer zone, anxious to avoid being dragged into peace negotiations with Syria which could lead to a pullout from the Golan Heights.

Faced with the rejection of both Netanyahu and Labour, Sharon backed down.

"I am sorry that my proposal was rejected. All I wanted to do was to exclude Lebanon from the election campaign," he said.

The opposition Labour Party and centre movement of former Netanyahu Defence Minister Yitzhak

Mordechai described Sharon's bid as an election ploy to save Netanyahu's flagging campaign.

"This is proof that Netanyahu can't govern," said Nehama Ronen, a centre party candidate for parliament.

The headquarters of Labour chief Ehud Barak, Netanyahu's main rival for the premiership, said Sharon issued his plan simply to counter Barak's announcement Tuesday that if elected he would pull Israeli troops out of Lebanon by June 2000.

"We have a serious proposal for withdrawal from Lebanon which is based on negotiations with Syria — this is a desperately weak response to our plan," said Shlomo Ben-Ami, a senior Labour official.

The Lebanon issue took centre stage in the election campaign after seven Israelis — including the top Israeli general in south Lebanon, were killed by Islamist guerrillas in less than a week.

In his campaign pledge, Barak said he would achieve a withdrawal by reviving peace negotiations with Syria — the main power in Lebanon — and working for deployment of an international peacekeeping force along the Israeli-Lebanon border.

With opinion polls showing most Israelis feel Netanyahu has not done enough to end the Lebanon crisis during his three years in office, the prime minister quickly said he too would bring the troops home in a year.

Truce panel finds guerrillas guilty of violating accords

NAQOURA (AFP) — The international committee monitoring a ceasefire in southern Lebanon on Wednesday found Lebanese guerrillas guilty of violating a 1996 ceasefire agreement not to put civilians at risk.

The monitoring group declared its ruling after a hastily arranged overnight meeting in an attempt to defuse rising tension following a series of deadly attacks on Israeli soldiers.

Lebanese Prime Minister Salim Hoss said he was satisfied with the results of the meeting.

"Lebanon, which has never attacked civilians, reiterates its commitment to respecting the April [1996]

agreement and places the responsibility on Israel for its violation on several occasions," he said.

The committee said in a statement that Lebanese guerrillas fired last week more than 70 mortar rounds over a period of 72 hours from within the village of Majdel Silm in southern Lebanon, "in violation" of the agreement.

"The firing occurred following the detection and pursuit by Israeli forces of a Lebanese armed group on a military mission," said the group, made up of delegates from France, Israel, Lebanon, Syria and the U.S.

The committee also said two Katyusha rockets were

fired by an armed group in Lebanon into northern Israel on Feb. 27, with one rocket damaging a house and car and the other slamming on a road near a village.

The 1996 truce agreement commits the two sides not to target civilians on either side of the border, and not to launch attacks from civilian areas.

"In the context of current tensions, the monitoring group welcomed commitment of the parties to uphold the April understanding and, in this regard, noted the important role the group can play in protecting civilians by building mutual restraint, diffusing tensions and preventing

escalation," the statement said.

The group called on the two sides to abide by terms of the truce agreement because of "their shared interest in avoiding provocative actions and containing the impact of violence on civilians."

The meeting was brought forward following the deadly clashes in south Lebanon.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced a "new policy" of harsher reprisals after a spate of recent troop losses, including a top general and an elite paratroops commander at the hands of Islamist guerrillas in less than a week.

Gulf Arab states to send 'clear message' to Iran

ABU DHABI (AFP) — The United Arab Emirates (UAE) press on Wednesday said the Gulf Arab foreign ministers' emergency meeting this week in Abu Dhabi would send a "clear message" to Iran.

"The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) ministerial meeting, which will discuss Iran's transgressions and military manoeuvres in the emirates' territorial waters, will send a clear message" to Tehran, the Al Itihad daily said.

"This meeting is of particu-

lar importance in that it is a rapid reaction to the hostile Iranian moves towards the emirates' right to exercise sovereignty over the emirate islands occupied by Iran," the newspaper said.

"This meeting constitutes a turning point in the Gulf Arab attitude to the question of the islands," Al Itihad said.

Al Bayan newspaper said the meeting would send "a unified message, which could lead the Iranian leadership to revise its unilateral moves on the Abu Musa island, to show good intentions and accept

international arbitration to resolve the conflict."

The Al Khaleej daily accused Iran of "procrastinating, despite the efforts deployed for a peaceful solution to the conflict, of refusing international arbitration and practising a policy of fait accompli."

"It is normal that the UAE should ask the GCC foreign ministers to discuss the very serious developments," in the conflict, the newspaper said.

The islands of Abu Musa and the Lesser and Greater Tunbs are claimed by both

Iran and the UAE, which has repeatedly called on Tehran to accept dialogue or international arbitration to resolve the dispute.

The UAE formally protested to U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan over Tehran's opening of a new town hall earlier this month on Abu Musa.

Iran has controlled the three islands since 1971 after Britain ended its protectorate in the region. Tehran rejects arbitration, claiming the islands are part of its territory.

U.S. urging Israel to facilitate trade — official

(Continued from page 1)

"I've been told... that there is a real willingness on the part of the Palestinians to accept more Jordanian goods, so I think the key is Israel," he said. "We are hopeful that they will move promptly. This is critical to Jordan's economic health."

Yesterday, before speaking with reporters, Eizenstat met with His Majesty King Abdullah.

During the meeting, he reaffirmed Washington's determination to support Jordan by providing supplemental economic aid to the country in addition to its regular allocations to Jordan as part of the annual foreign aid, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

Eizenstat underlined the

importance of Jordan's role in the region and said the late King Hussein played a key role in achieving peace and stability in the Middle East.

Speaking in the presence of Planning Minister Nabil Ammari and the U.S. chargé d'affaires, Eizenstat said the U.S. will encourage donor nations to provide aid to Jordan and will urge Israel to open the door for Jordanian exports to reach the Palestinian markets during his upcoming visit to Israel.

Earlier in the day, Eizenstat met with Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh. The two reviewed U.S. economic assistance to Jordan and Washington's efforts to increase the volume of trade between Jordan and Israel as well as Jordan and

the PNA. Petra said.

Tarawneh voiced Jordan's appreciation of the U.S. administration's efforts to speed up the delivery of supplemental aid to the Kingdom.

Tarawneh also expressed Jordan's appreciation of U.S. efforts with the Bretton Woods institutions to increase the volume of aid to Jordan. The prime minister briefed Eizenstat on Jordan's contacts with the PNA and Israel to increase trade volume with the two entities by removing obstacles to trade with the Palestinian self-rule areas.

Eizenstat also met with Ammari, Minister of State for Development Affairs Taher Kana'an, Finance Minister Michel Marto and Central Bank of Jordan Governor Zeid Fariz for a

detailed review of economic cooperation.

Eizenstat said the United States congratulated Jordan on signing a renewed agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (see separate story).

"The agreement is important because the new IMF programme will provide direct financial support and is a road map for further economic reform," Eizenstat said. "[The agreement] is important for another reason, that is it gives Jordan an economic framework with which it can go to the Paris Club of creditor nations to seek a rescheduling of its debt obligations. The United States will support the substantial rescheduling of Jordan's obligations with the Paris Club."

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 4773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

19:10News headlines
19:35Doc. — Perspective
20:00 News in Arabic (Channel 2 links up with channel 1)
20:30 Programme on the late His Majesty King Hussein
21:00 Islamic History in Jordan
21:30On the Banks of Jordan
22:00News in English
22:10 Doc. — National Geographic
23:00News in Arabic (Channel 2 links up with channel 1)

PRAYER TIMES

04:40Fajr
05:56(Sunrise) Duha
11:47Dhuhr
15:05Asr
17:38Maghreb
18:55Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweifich, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622366
Anglican Church Tel. 4624853/4624811
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 4771751
Amman International Church Tel. 5865897
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 5811295

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4646138
Church of Presentation, Sweifich Tel. 5930146
The United Catholic Church Tel. 4624757
The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel. 4892679
The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052
The Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 4771331
The Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 4775261

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Stable weather conditions will prevail during the weekend with temperatures rising slightly. It will be moderate during the day becoming cool at night with winds northwesterly moderate. In Aqaba, it will be warm, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

Amman06/16
Aqaba12/22
Deserts04/18
Jordan Valley14/23

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 12, Aqaba 21.
Humidity readings: Amman 74 per cent, Aqaba 35 per cent.

Following are the temperatures expected today in the following areas:

Ajloun04/13
Jerash05/17
Um Qays06/17
Madaba04/15
Petra05/16
Dead Sea12/23

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Khalil Tushuq475223
Dr. Bahjat Bader533242
Dr. Nasser Ibrahim5350432
Dr. Wafiq Qaddumi4893542

AMMAN:
Firas Pharmacy5661912
Al Salam Pharmacy 4636730
Mayadah Pharmacy5537004
Rukn Al Dawa Pharmacy 5536169

IRBID:
Dr. Issam Saib(02)46858
Fou'ad Pharmacy (02)75360
ZARQA:
Dr. Tareq Hijwaji(05)985445
Palestine Pharmacy(05)983562

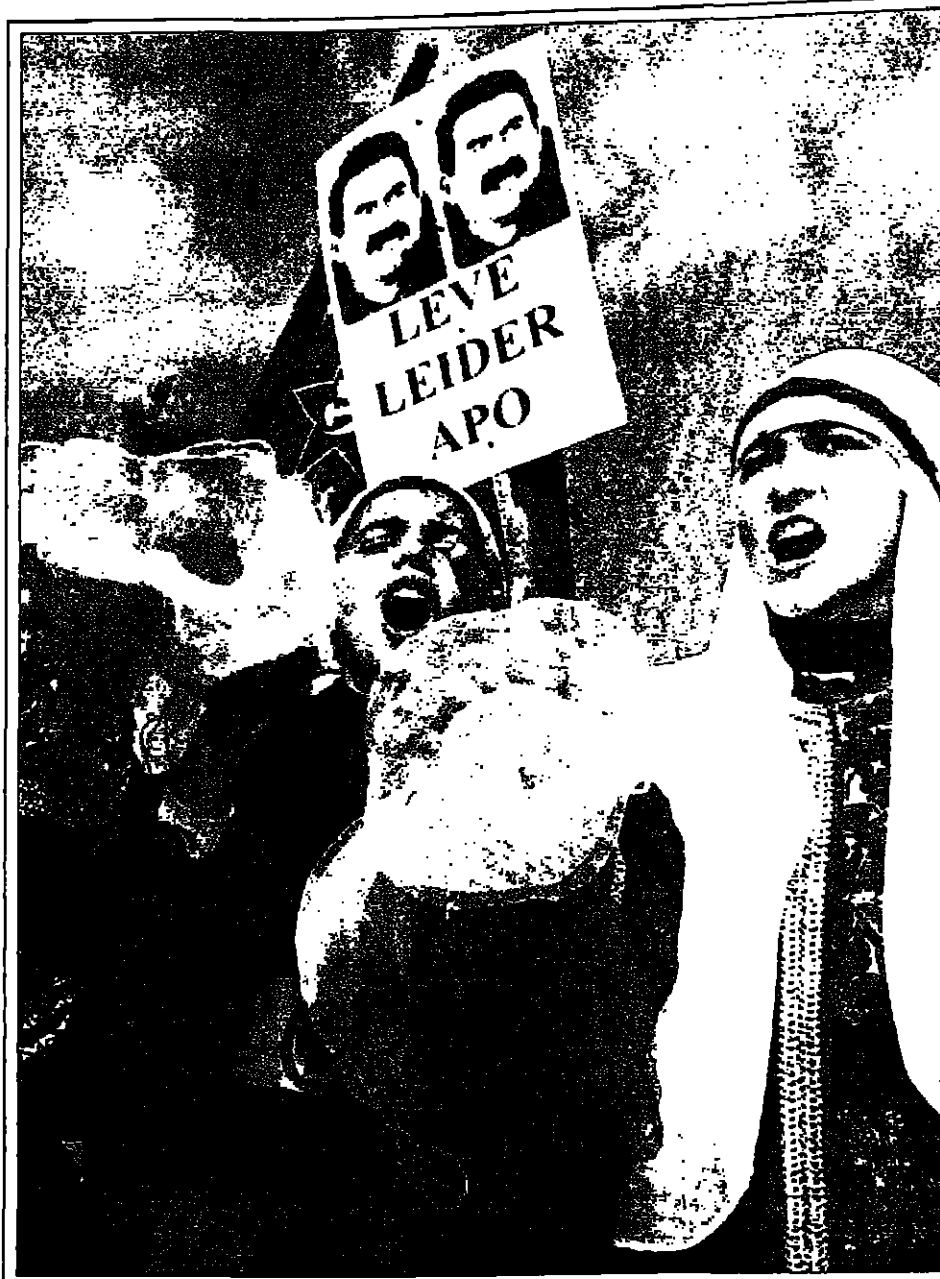
EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre4637111
Civil Defence Department 5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue4630341
Civil Defence Emergency199
Rescue Police 192 4621111, 4637777
Fire Brigade4617101
Blood Bank4775121
Highway Police5343402
Traffic police4896390
Public Security Dept.4630321
Hotel Complaints5605800
Price Complaints5661176
Water & Sewage Complaints 489467
Amman Municipality Complaints4787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance)121
Overseas Calls0132
Central Amman Telephone Repairs4623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs5661101
Jordan Television4773111
Radio Jordan4774111
Water Authority5680100
J. Electricity Authority 5815615
Electric Power Co.4636381
RJ Flight Information 44-53200
Queen Alia Int. Airport 44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery5921199
The Islamic, Abdli5666131/7
Husseini Medical Centre 5856856
Luzmila4630195
Khalidi Maternity464281/6

AKILAH MATERNITY4642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity4642362
Malhas, J. Amman4636104
Palestine, Shmeisani5607071
Shmeisani Hospital5607431
Jordan Hospital5607550
University Hospital5353444
Al-Munasher Hospital 566727/9
Al-Ahli, Abdali5664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 4777101/3
Al-Bashir4775111/26
Army, Marka4891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital5157100
Amal Hospital5607155
Al Amal Cancer Centre 5353000



Kurdish youth dressed in traditional clothes dance during a sit-in held in front of the United Nations headquarters in Beirut on Wednesday. About 200 Lebanese Kurds protested outside the U.N. on Wednesday, demanding freedom for jailed guerrilla leader Abdullah Ocalan (Reuters photo)

Book says Israel blackmailed Clinton about Lewinsky affair

NEW YORK (AFP) — A new book alleges Israel's intelligence service secretly taped U.S. President Bill Clinton's racy phone talks with Monica Lewinsky and used them to blackmail him, the New York Post reported Wednesday.

Israel's renowned Mossad spy agency used the tapes of conversations between the president and the former White House intern to compel Clinton to call off FBI hunt for an Israeli spy working at the White House, according to the Post's description of the book.

Written by respected British author Gordon Thomas, "Gideon's Spies — The Secret History of the Mossad" was due out at bookstores next week.

The White House emphatically denied Gordon's account on Wednesday.

"The book is nonsense

— to tell you the truth, book sellers ought to consider selling it in the fiction section," said White House spokesman Barry Toiv. Another White House spokesman, David Leavy, maintained that presidential communications were secure.

"I am not aware of any phone tapping of the president's lines. We take all precautions to make sure that his communications are secure. The story is nonsense in my view," he said.

But the Post recalled that in the report by Independent Council Kenneth Starr to Congress, which formed the basis for Clinton's impeachment trial, Lewinsky said the president suspected their telephone calls were bugged by a foreign government.

She said Clinton told her that if she were ever asked about the phone sex, she was to pretend

that the calls were just a joke.

According to Thomas, however, Mossad Inspector General Danny Yatom had obtained 30 hours of tapes of sexually explicit phone calls and decided to use them to block the FBI hunt for an Israeli mole code-named "Mega," described as highly placed in the White House.

"So far as anyone knows, the Israeli agent Mega — a much more important spy than the imprisoned CIA traitor Jonathan Pollard, and probably his controller — is still in place at the White House," Thomas was quoted as telling the Post from London.

Pollard, a former U.S. navy intelligence analyst, has served 13 years of a life sentence for spying for Israel.

BRIEFS

Palestinians want U.S. help in row with Israel

RAMALLAH (AFP) — The Palestinians have asked the United States to intervene in a dispute with Israel over the establishment of a sewage treatment plant in the West Bank, officials said Wednesday. Israeli authorities have threatened to block construction of the German-financed plant in the village of Salfit unless the Palestinians agree to make it part of a joint facility which could also serve the adjacent Jewish settlement of Ariel. Nabil Shaath, the Palestinian minister of planning and international cooperation, rejected the Israeli demand, saying the plant is being paid for by donations to the Palestinian National Authority.

'No security for Israel unless it withdraws'

DAMASCUS (R) — Syrian state-run newspapers said on Wednesday that Israel would not enjoy security unless it withdrew its troops from the Golan Heights and south Lebanon. The Syria Times praised the Lebanese guerrillas who on Sunday killed an Israeli general, the highest-ranking Israeli officer to be killed in south Lebanon since 1982. Real security and peace would be realised only through an unconditional Israeli pullback from the Golan, south Lebanon and other occupied Arab territories, it added.

'Blitz on Lebanon will lead to Netanyahu downfall'

BEIRUT (AFP) — A large-scale Israeli attack on Lebanon could lead to the downfall of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Syrian Foreign Minister Faruk Al Sharaa has told a Lebanese newspaper. "Such an attack will provoke retaliation by the resistance," he said in an interview published in the pro-Syrian leftist Al Safir newspaper on Wednesday. "Aggression against Lebanon could bring down Netanyahu as it brought down [former Prime Minister Shimon] Peres," who lost the 1996 elections after the ill-fated Grapes of Wrath offensive, he added.

12:30Paris (RJ)
19:30Abu Dhabi, Al 'Ain (RJ)
20:10Cairo (RJ)
20:20Larnaca (RJ)
21:00Jeddah (add) (RJ)
21:40Jeddah (RJ)
23:30Jeddah (add) (RJ)
00:10Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta (RJ)
02:00Amsterdam (add) (RJ)
05:15Amsterdam (RJ)

Other Flights
05:50Damascus, Frankfurt (LH)
14:45Riyadh (SV)
15:00Annabab, Algiers (AF)
15:35Doha (QR)
17:00Damascus, Dubai (EK)
18:15 Abu Dhabi, Muscat (GF)
20:00Beirut (ME)
20:50Tel Aviv (LY)
21:40Cairo (MS)
01:55Moscow (SU)
02:15Amsterdam (KL)
04:45Alexandria (BA)
06:00Istanbul (TK)
07:25Paris (AF)
09:05London (BA)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights For Thursday
08:30 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
11:30 Tel Aviv (from Marka Airport) (RW)
19:45 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
20:15 Tel Aviv (from Marka Airport) (RW)

For Friday
08:30 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
13:30 Gaza (from Marka Airport) (RW)
16:15 Tel Aviv (from QAIA) (RW)
20:30 Aqaba (from QAIA) (RW)

AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44)53200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone 44 (52700). Information on Royal Wings flights can be supplied on phone 4875201-5

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:15Sanaa (RJ)
08:40Bombay (RJ)
08:50Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
09:00Jeddah (add) (RJ)
09:30New Delhi (RJ)
10:05Beirut (RJ)
10:15Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
10:15Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
10:45Colombo (RJ)
15:00 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
16:25London (RJ)
17:00Jeddah (add) (RJ)
18:05Kuwait (RJ)
18:05Athens (RJ)
19:55Bangkok, Calcutta (RJ)
22:30Amsterdam (add) (RJ)
23:45Larnaca (RJ)
01:59Jeddah (add) (RJ)
03:40 Abu Dhabi, Al 'Ain (RJ)
04:30Jeddah (add) (RJ)

Other Flights
13:15Riyadh (SV)
14:10Shariqah (AH)
14:45Doha (QR)
15:55Dubai (EK)

17:25Muscat, Dubai (GF)
18:40Beirut (ME)
19:05Paris (AF)
20:25Tel Aviv (LY)
20:40Cairo (MS)
23:10Istanbul (TK)
00:25Moscow (SU)
01:15Amsterdam (KL)
04:10London (BA)
08:20Alexandria (BA)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights For Thursday
08:50 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
13:45 Tel Aviv (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)
18:00 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)
23:15 Tel Aviv (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
For Friday
08:50 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
17:30 Gaza (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
18:00 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)
18:40 Tel Aviv (arriving at QAIA) (RW)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:30Beirut (RJ)
11:15Shannon, Chicago (RJ)
11:25Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)
12:00Jeddah (add) (RJ)
12:00Amsterdam (add) (RJ)
12:05Kuwait (RJ)
12:15London (RJ)
12:15Athens (RJ)

Two-day weekend continues to stir controversy

Union threatens to sue Central Bank...

...while Parliament stands a house divided

By Suha Ma'ayeh

AMMAN — A tug-of-war between the Jordan Trade Union of Insurance and Auditor Employees (JTUIAE) and the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) has sharpened with the former considering plans to take CBJ Governor Ziyad Fariz to court over alleged abuses and violation of employees' rights.

The move comes following the CBJ's recent decision to introduce a two-day weekend (Friday and Saturday), and extended daily banking hours to compensate for the lost time.

The decision, which took effect on March 1, requires the country's 22 commercial banks to operate from Sunday to Thursday, from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. with a minimum 30-minute lunch break, bringing the total number of working hours to a maximum of 42.5 instead of 36 hours.

Despite bankers' affirmations that the new arrangement will boost economic and business performance, JTUIAE officials insist

that only bank owners will benefit from the changes.

The decision was received with storms of protests since most bank employees, who number some 15,000, find it difficult to make major adjustments to their daily routine.

The union said that it decided to take action after it sent scores of memoranda over the last two weeks lobbying the CBJ, bank administrations and Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh to alter working hours to start at 8:00 and end at 3:30, but to no avail.

Fakhri Zayadin, JTUIAE deputy said bank administration are only applying laws that best serve their interests, disregarding other articles in the labour law which serve those of employees.

He was referring to Article 56 of the 1996 Labour Law which sets a maximum of eight working hours per day and a maximum of 48 hours per week spread over six days, at most.

Most bank employees

have worked for 36 hours weekly since the early 1960s. This, Zayadin added, has become an acquired right.

"Therefore, employees should be compensated for having to work extra hours," he said.

"Now that banks have lent their approval to the CBJ, they have to abide by the other laws which serve employees," he told the Jordan Times in an interview.

"Working mothers are entitled to have nurseries for their children. For example," Zayadin said referring to article 72 which says in institutions where there are more than 20 mothers, employers must secure nurseries for children below the age of four.

"The JTUIAE is awaiting to see if bank administrations abide by the unions' demands which are in line with the 1996 labour law. When the picture becomes clearer the union will contest with the banks' administrations," he said.

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — The Lower House of Parliament on Wednesday stood divided over the controversial government proposal to introduce a two-day weekend which would add Thursday to the existing Friday holiday.

The House floor heard deputies speak for and against the two-day holiday and its benefits and disadvantages.

A major point of contention is that the proposal, which has come under harsh criticism from business and commercial sectors, also stipulates increasing public sector working hours by one hour each day to compensate hours lost to the Thursday holiday.

The banking and stock market sectors began observing a two-day weekend on March 1, taking Friday and Saturday off.

"We are in the midst of serious economic problems. Therefore, there is no need for a two-day

weekend which, if approved, will have a negative impact on productivity and will increase production costs," said deputy Abdul Razzaq Tubeishat, who opposed the proposal.

"It put a social and economic burden which our society is unable to shoulder. Therefore, I believe that it is better if we postpone the discussion on this proposal," he told his colleagues.

Deputy Mahmoud Kharabsheh supported Tubeishat's position.

"This proposal is not in the benefit of the country which already witnesses low productivity of the Jordanian employees, especially during the final hours of the work day," he said.

"If we increase the working hours, productivity will decrease again and again," Kharabsheh added.

According to Deputy Mohammad Thweib, "the new proposal will mean more laziness among employees and more relaxation and a decline in their ability to work."

Deputy Mohammad Oran spoke in favour of the two-day weekend and said its application will reduce traffic accidents by 15 per cent and will ease traffic jams in different parts of the capital.

Deputy Abdullah Akaleh also expressed support for the proposal, but urged the government not to substitute the second day with additional working hours.

Some deputies charged that an increase in working hours would be in violation of Article 58 of the Labour Law, which stipulates that working hours for private sector workers should not exceed eight hours a day.

The banking sector has ordered its employees to work from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily to compensate for the lost hours in taking an additional day off.

Tarawneh told the 80-member Parliament that the government has agreed in principle to approve Thursday and Friday as the weekend, but noted that no final decision has

been taken yet.

Addressing lawmakers ahead of Parliament's debate on the issue during the upcoming ordinary session, Tarawneh conceded that the proposal has received nearly equal support and rejection.

He added that many of those who opposed the idea were merely rejecting Thursday as a holiday and would prefer that the second day off be Saturday.

The premier said Thursday was considered a more appropriate holiday because "more than half of the society, namely school and university students, are on holiday while the Armed Forces, whom we have consulted, preferred this day as a weekend."

He said that among the benefits of the Thursday-Friday scheme is an annual savings of JD15 million in reduced energy costs in government departments.

Tarawneh said that the new weekend will enhance domestic tourism, strengthen contacts between families and offer workers and employees an

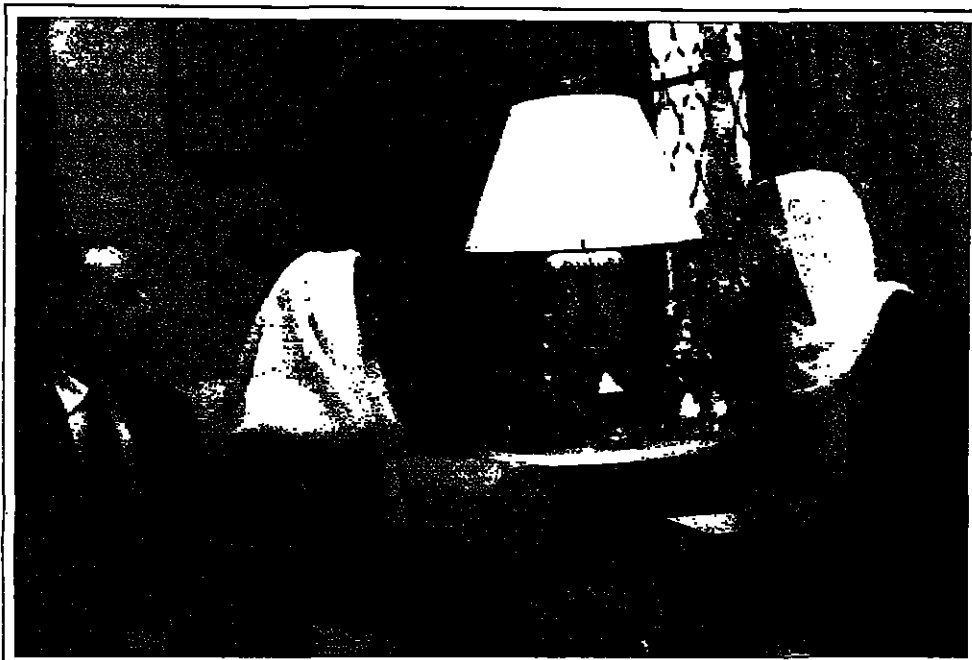
additional source of income by benefiting from the weekend for additional work, especially in the agriculture sector.

He added that he received a memorandum from leaders of the chambers of commerce and industry and the Jordanian Businessmen's Association urging him to postpone such a decision.

"We are passing through difficult economic circumstances with economic growth in the past two years reaching a mere one per cent. We do not need an experiment that might exacerbate the economic and social problems," the memorandum said.

The final decision of whether to implement the Thursday-Friday weekend holiday lies with Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh.

During Wednesday's session at least 23 lawmakers supported the idea, 12 objected and another 11 urged the government to postpone a decision on the issue.



QUEEN NOOR MEETS MENEM: Her Majesty Queen Noor Wednesday received the daughter of the President of Argentina, Zulema Maria Even Menem at Bab Al Salam. Menem presented the Queen with a letter from Carlos Menem, who sent his daughter to "convey his feelings of sorrow for the loss of His Majesty King Hussein."

The Queen said under His Majesty King Abdullah's leadership, Jordan will forge even stronger ties with Argentina.

Ambassador of Argentina Juan Antonio Pardo (based in Syria) and Ambassador of Argentina to the United Nations Fernando Petrella also attended.

Haddadin's son acquitted of heroin smuggling charge

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — The Court of Cassation has acquitted the son of a deputy who in October of 1997 was arrested in a high profile case on charges of smuggling heroin to the Kingdom, the defendant's attorneys and judicial sources confirmed Wednesday.

Samer Haddadin, 31, son of Third District opposition Deputy Khalil Haddadin, along with two other men were sentenced to seven-and-a-half-years each by the State Security Court on April 26, 1998, after being convicted of complicity in smuggling drugs into the Kingdom.

Last week, the Court of Cassation acquitted all three men of the charges because "of procedural errors" in the investigation, judicial sources told the Jordan Times.

"The court doubted some of the evidence that was presented against the defendants, and the court cannot convict anyone when there are doubts as to the procedures or the evidence," the source, who preferred not to be named, said.

Haddadin's Defence Attorneys Mohammad Hantoush and Mohammad Dubbati told the Jordan Times that their clients were released from custody last week.

"We had faith in the justice system, and I was pleased that justice was served in the end," Dubbati told the Jordan Times Wednesday evening.

Samer Haddadin, an engineer, was arrested by Anti-Narcotics Department agents on Oct. 26, 1997, for allegedly smuggling five kilograms of heroin into the country.

The Cassation Court also acquitted Ahmad Abdul Hai, 32, and Majdi Agel, 32. All three defendants spent almost 17 months in prison.

A fourth defendant, Farid Quasar, 52, a Lebanese, was acquitted by the State Security Court in April 1998.

According to prosecution's charge sheet, the four defendants, who were friends, decided in August 1998 to smuggle the heroin and to smuggle the drug from Lebanon to sell in Jordan.

News of their arrest was made public by the Jordan News Agency, Petra, just one week before voters headed to the polls to elect the 13th Parliament.

The official agency quoted officials as saying that Samer Haddadin and three others were arrested following the seizure of a truck carrying horses from Lebanon to a farm in the Jordan Valley.

Samer's father, Khalil Haddadin, who was then running for the Amman's

Third District Christian seat, described the arrest as a "time trap." He said at the time that he was sure of his son's innocence "as much as I am sure of the justice of our law."

Haddadin continued with the campaigning "because this is the destiny of fighters." He won the Christian seat in Amman's Third District, collecting over 3,000 votes.

Opposition parties, represented by the Higher Committee for Coordination Among the Opposition Parties, criticised the publication and circulation of the name of Haddadin's son by Petra shortly after the arrest in an official statement saying that "the official media have initiated a campaign to incriminate Haddadin's son before the court makes a decision."

NAF undergoes administrative overhaul

By Hind-Lara Mango

AMMAN — A series of corrective and remedial action are being implemented within the National Aid Fund (NAF) as part of a three-year executive action plan.

The overhaul is based on a review of the activities and administrative structure of the NAF by a taskforce commissioned by the Ministry of Planning.

"For the past year now the fund has been undergoing major restructuring and expansion of its administrative structure and programmes of assistance to the poor through the RENAF programme," said Fayiz Suyyagh Director of the RENAF Project.

He told the Jordan Times that among the many changes introduced is the inclusion of the employable poor and "occasionally employed poor whose income is still not sufficient to bring them up to the absolute poverty line" on the list of fund recipients.

The able-bodied unemployed and the working poor, who form the majority of the poor in Jordan, were previously excluded from any form of assistance.

Eligibility criteria for receiving cash transfers apply to orphans' families, widows, families of partially disabled or physically disabled, families of prisoners, and the elderly.

Studies indicate that a poor family has on average nine children or more.

Previously, the NAF defined a family as a family consisting of six children. Any additional ones were excluded from assistance in the past.

RENAF modified eligibility criteria for cash assistance to cater to families having up to ten children and to include those falling below the poverty line, not just those with special circumstances.

Suyyagh said, "The criteria would entail the family's income regardless of physical or special circumstances." He added, "RENAF aspires to improve public cash assistance targeted at the poor through strengthening and expanding NAF's operations and programmes, and upgrading its efficiency and effectiveness in serving poor households."

An eligible head of household initially receives JD30 a month through NAF, and JD5 for the first two members of the household. The third up to the tenth member now receives JD6 each.

After determining gaps in the coverage of the eligible population, RENAF is attempting to bridge the gap between the current income level of poor households and the absolute poverty line through programmes such as the Family Income Supplement Scheme to be introduced this year.

"Targeted groups are the working poor and the poor who have retired who receive pensions or social insurance and whose incomes still fall below the poverty line. The FIS will include civilian and military retired people, those receiving daily pay in various government departments and in private sector enterprises," Suyyagh said.

At a later stage the FIS will target the unemployed who are able and willing to work.

The FIS programme is to start in the second half of this year with a budget of JD13.8 million for the coming three years.

To date, NAF offers financial assistance to 250,000 poor people in 40,000 households around the Kingdom. Each is provided with direct cash or in-kind transfers in line with current government programmes to tackle poverty and unemployment. Jordan's impoverished now constitute one-

third of the population, while the unemployed constitute anywhere from 16-27 per cent, according to official and unofficial estimates.

The aim is to expand NAF's "current cash assistance programmes to reach a larger percentage of the poor," Suyyagh said. Previously, NAF was only able to assist 54 per cent of the total number of families below the absolute poverty line.

According to the Ministry of Social Development the absolute poverty line is estimated at an income of JD61 a month for an average family of 6.8, and the absolute poverty line stands at an income JD119 a month for families that pay rent, and JD97 a month for families that do not pay rent.

Suyyagh explained that "the absolute poverty line set is based on the cost of basic food and non-food requirements that include shelter, education, health, clothing, and transportation."

Jordanians living under the absolute poverty line stand at six to eight per cent of the population. The percentage of families below the absolute poverty line are approximately 20 per cent of the population.

The NAF falls under the Social Productivity Programme; the national organisation responsible for addressing poverty and unemployment in the country.

Since its inception in 1986, NAF has been providing cash transfers, the largest chunk of its work, to the unemployable poor and to households with incomes less than JD60 per month. New modifications for a family of up to 10 children is JD83 monthly.

NAF assistance also includes disaster alleviation and physical rehabilitation. It gives loans for income generation, and provides vocational training. The fund's annual budget has been increased to JD22 mil-

lion this year with cash transfers accounting to JD17 million of this amount.

A pilot Wage Subsidy Scheme has also been introduced where 50 able and productive poor have been employed, for a six-month period in the private sector. Among those employed were 25 females.

NAF pays part of the salary of these employees and the privately-owned company the rest.

It is estimated that around 3,000 poor people will be employed through this scheme.

"This venture has proven very successful and has encouraged the private sector in providing employment opportunities for these people," Suyyagh said.

The NAF package enables beneficiaries to make use of the food coupon system, the health card programme, and wheat subsidy compensation.

Suyyagh said that many of the eligible poor do not opt for NAF assistance, held back by social barriers and values. Abu Ahmad, father of ten children, lives at Safa Al Nuzha in eastern Amman, where 10,000 residents live on one square kilometre of land under harsh economic circumstances.

He is poor and unemployed and his three teenage sons cannot find work.

Abu Ahmad does not make use of NAF assistance as he feels to ask for help would be more "like begging." He prefers to ask relatives for help.

"Many of the poor don't know of us or just don't approach us because of social taboos," said Suyyagh. "They believe that by asking for NAF cash assistance they are begging. In reality NAF assistance is a civil right of the poor."

An ounce of poverty prevention beats a pound of cure

By Susan Resheq

AMMAN — Minister of Social Development Mohammed Kheir Mansour Monday said addressing the causes of poverty and social problems is more productive than spending money trying to solve these problems.

At a seminar titled "The Current State of Social Work in Jordan and Future Challenges," held at the Shoman Cultural Forum the minister said, "Over the past ten years, the Ministry of Social Development spent JD212 million curing problems caused by poverty. Until now, we have not solved the causes of these problems, although many programmes have been launched."

Mansour said an "ever-growing population, the unjust distribution of income among citizens, a drop in labour productivity, unemployment and low salaries, and the limited-scope of social assistance programmes" all contribute to poverty.

"Eventually, we will see problems with dangerous consequences for society," the minister said. He said an increased number of indigent people, malnutrition, diseases, begging and homelessness are all possible consequences.

"We should not forget that

[these factors] have increased migration from the countryside to cities, and have created social and family problems," Mansour added.

The number of families that benefited from the ministry's monthly financial aid last year was 40,000; it is expected to reach 50,000 families by the end of 1999.

Mansour said the ministry has programmes to solve children's problems, those with special needs, broken families, and the needy or sick people. It also has programmes designed to prevent the exploitation of women.

"Spreading family planning awareness is a priority of the ministry, especially among poor families, whose number has increased," Mansour said, adding that the poor form 22 per cent of Jordanian society.

The ministry has launched programmes to rehabilitate and train the handicapped, on which the ministry spent JD1 million in equipment purchases, said the minister.

Mansour said that there are three main sectors — the governmental, the voluntary and the private — dealing with social work.

"The ministry has several plans meant to reduce poverty and unemployment rates in the Kingdom," he added.

WHAT'S GOING ON

FILMS

* German children's film "Die Sendung mit der Maus" — Ostergeschichten at Goethe-Institut, Jabal Amman on Saturday March 6 at 5:00 p.m.
* "The Fifth Element" at Books@Café, Jabal Amman on Sunday March 7 at 8:30 p.m. (Tel. 4650457/8).

LECTURES

* Lecture by Mahmoud Rimawi about his experience in writing (in Arabic) at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh on Sunday March 7 at 6:00 p.m.
* "The Antiquities of Ghor Al Safi" at the Friends of Archaeology Centre on Monday March 8 at 6:30 p.m. (Telephone: 5930682).
* "The Arab Intellectual and the Inevitability of Globalisation" at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, Jabal Amman on Monday March 8 at 6:30 p.m.

The editor and staff of the Jordan Times wish to offer their condolences on the passing of **Nawal Masarweh** Aunt of our colleague and friend **Reem Jasser** May her soul rest in peace

Soldiers fire warning shots in Indonesian city

AMBON, Indonesia (AP) —

The Indonesian military launched a major troop buildup Wednesday in a riot-torn provincial capital, but unrest broke out despite the presence of the reinforcements.

Soldiers fired warning shots in front of a church in coastal Ambon to disperse a Christian mob and blocked hundreds of Muslims who were marching towards the Christians.

In the capital, Jakarta, about 2,000 Islamic students gathered outside the military's headquarters and accused soldiers of supporting Christian rioters. They chanted "Holy war" and "God is great."

About 90 per cent of Indonesia's 210 million people are Muslim, making it the world's most populous Islamic state. A large proportion of Ambon's population, however, is Christian.

In a leadership shakeup, military chief Gen. Wiranto fired the regional police chief who has been handling the religious clashes that have claimed at least 38 lives in the past week.

Wiranto, like many Indonesians, sees just one

name.

At least 161 people, including two soldiers, have been slain since the violence erupted in January in Maluku province, once known as the Spice Islands, according to Information Minister Yunus Yosfiah. More than 400 people have been wounded.

Yosfiah said rioters burned or vandalised 18 churches and 18 mosques, 134 vehicles and 3,544 houses.

Tens of thousands of people fled their homes as rival mobs fought with swords, bows and arrows and gasoline bombs.

The latest unrest in Ambon, Maluku's capital, broke out after unidentified assailants stabbed a Christian refugee staying in a Protestant church. Angry Christians then tried to stop a car believed to be owned by Muslims.

Soldiers fired in the air and blocked Muslim refugees, some carrying knives, who tried to approach the Christians from a nearby mosque.

Monday, five people were killed when Christians attacked worshippers at a mosque near Ambon. The military



Muslim Indonesian students break into tears during a demonstration in Jakarta's central Monas Square. More than 2,000 Muslim students massed at the park shouting 'jihad' and accusing the military and Christians of ethnic cleansing in the riot-torn city of Ambon (AFP photo)

denied that its officers shot four Muslims as well as allegations that it had taken sides in the fighting.

About 1,400 troop reinforcements arrived in Ambon, 2,250 kilometres east of Jakarta, Tuesday and Wednesday. Their numbers bolstered hundreds of police and soldiers already in the area.

At a welcoming ceremony, Maluku police chief

Col. Karyono told the new arrivals to remain neutral. "We hope the restoration of law and order will pave the way for a peace between the two bodies in conflict," Karyono said.

Hours later, in comments to reporters, Wiranto said without elaborating that Karyono would be replaced.

Wiranto also said that one battalion from neigh-

bouring Sulawesi island would be withdrawn from Ambon to curb speculation that its troops had sided with an ethnic group from their region.

He pledged that hundreds more soldiers would be sent to Ambon in the next few days and said they had orders to shoot troublemakers.

"I ordered the troops to shoot at their feet so as to

paralyse them, but not kill them," Wiranto said.

The student protesters in Jakarta condemned the military's handling of the violence.

"The soldiers are involved. They are taking sides," said one protester, who identified himself by the single name of Reza.

The protesters later marched peacefully to a nearby university.

Japan moves to authorise contraceptive pill

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan took a major step Wednesday towards approving the use of the contraceptive pill — after nine years of debate, and more than three decades after the pill went on sale in the West.

The central pharmaceutical affairs committee of the health and welfare ministry has ended nine years of negotiations on the release of the pill, a ministry official said.

"We finished most parts of the discussion on the issue today and there was a major step forward," the official said. "We believe that we cleared probably the biggest hurdle for the ministry's approval."

The committee will hold a final meeting in June to officially announce its recommendation to Health and Welfare Minister Sohei Miyashita that the pill go on sale.

"Today we discussed concerns about the spread of sexually transmitted disease such as AIDS and the

pill's side effects, and the committee concluded that the problems cannot be a major reason to prevent the release," the official said.

Sources said the pill is expected to go on sale by the end of the year.

Akitaka Saiki, deputy press secretary to Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi, said the committee was leaning towards approval but "there are still some pending issues."

Debate about the pill in Japan's media has been fuelled by the health ministry's swift approval for the male anti-impotence drug Viagra, announced on Jan. 25 after just six months' debate.

In 1997 there were 337,799 abortions in Japan, according to the health ministry.

Some blame Japan's refusal to legalise the pill on the medical lobby which supposedly wants to maintain a lucrative abortion business. Others see a government plot to keep women under control.

The government had cited concerns about side effects, although it does allow a higher-dosage version of the pill to be prescribed for hormonal problems.

A citizens' group supporting the use of the pill criticised the government for delaying its release.

"The government should have announced the use of the pill much earlier," said Midori Ashida, head of the professional woman's coalition for sexuality and health.

"Many countries proved the safety of the pill a long time ago," Ashida said. "We neither see any reason to oppose the use of the pill nor understand why the government has postponed its decision."

Kazuyo Nakamura, a member of the Tokyo-based organisation, said: "Japan is one of a few countries in the world which still do not allow the use of the pill. Japan is just out of the world's trend, which is a shame."

Cook on nuclear waste fact-finding trip to Murmansk

MOSCOW (AFP) — Foreign Secretary Robin Cook arrived in the northern port of Murmansk Wednesday to see how Britain can help Russia clean up the environmental hazard posed by scrapped nuclear submarines, officials said.

Arriving at the start of a three-day visit to Russia, Cook visited the Atomflot body responsible for reprocessing spent nuclear fuel and disposing of nuclear reactors from the decommissioned atomic sub fleet, officials added.

Ecology groups have criticised storage facilities for spent nuclear fuel in the port, home to Russia's northern fleet, and claim waste is contaminating the area and poses a threat to Scandinavia.

British embassy spokesman Mike Haddock said Cook was on a fact-finding trip to see how British experience in treating nuclear waste could help Russia

tackle the environmental threat posed by the rusting Murmansk submarines.

"We know that nuclear waste disposal is a problem. It's a big problem, not only for Russia but for Western countries too," Haddock told AFP.

"We have some experience of this and there are British companies with experience of this and it may be possible that they can help the Russians," said Haddock.

Murmansk regional officials told the ITAR-TASS news agency that Britain could help fund a Norwegian-backed project to build a liquid radioactive waste reprocessing plant and a state-of-the-art facility to store solid radioactive waste.

Cook will also discuss how to dispose of the rusting atomic submarines which are slowly decaying in Murmansk, the biggest city inside the Arctic Circle, the agency reported.

However, Haddock would only say that the British official wanted to see the situation on the ground for himself before recommending concrete action.

The environmental hazard is the unexpected fallout of nuclear disarmament treaties signed by Moscow and the West which led to a large number of atomic submarines being taken out of service.

Britain's chief diplomat is due to fly to Moscow later Wednesday ahead of talks Thursday with his Russian counterpart Igor Ivanov.

The foreign ministry said the two men will discuss a range of bilateral topics as well as international issues, notably controversial Anglo-U.S. air strikes in Iraq and troubled peace talks over Yugoslavia's rebel Kosovo province.

Cook is scheduled to fly to the Black Sea coastal resort of Sochi Friday for talks with Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Sri Lanka against signing land mines treaty

COLOMBO (AP) — Sri Lanka will not immediately sign the Ottawa treaty which calls for an international ban on land mines, its foreign minister said Wednesday. "Given the prevailing context, Sri Lanka is not yet in a position to indicate the timing of her accession to the convention," Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar said in a statement in Colombo. Kadirgamar conveyed his country's position to visiting Austrian State Minister for Foreign Affairs Benita Ferrero-Waldner who urged Sri Lanka to sign the treaty. The two foreign ministers met in the Sri Lankan capital Tuesday. The Ottawa treaty, already signed by 133 countries and ratified by 66, comes into force Monday. Kadirgamar did not give reasons but the island nation is fighting Tamil separatists since 1983 in the north and east. Government forces as well as the guerrillas use land mines and other explosive devices. The rebels are fighting for a separate homeland for minority Tamils, accusing the Sinhalese majority of widespread discrimination in education and jobs. More than 57,000 people have been killed in the ethnic conflict.

Ugandan rebels kill five in a camp for displaced people

KAMPALA (AP) — Ugandan rebels of the allied democratic forces raided a western Ugandan camp for displaced people and hacked to death five residents, a newspaper reported Wednesday. The raid occurred Monday near Ntoto village, about 340 kilometres west of the Ugandan capital, Kampala, said the government-owned New Vision newspaper. The people had fled their homes, isolated in the countryside, to avoid attacks by the rebels. New Vision quoted witnesses as saying the eight rebels were also armed with machine guns and had earlier hidden along a highway in an apparently abortive ambush against motorists. After attacking the camp, the rebels broke into nearby stores and stole an assortment of food, the newspaper said. It quoted security sources as saying the raiders came from nearby Semiliki National Park, along the border with the Democratic Republic of Congo, formerly Zaire. Semiliki is about 210 kilometres north of Bwindi National Park, where Rwandan Hutu rebels hacked to death eight tourists. The Ugandan rebels are a completely different group with different goals. They include Muslim fundamentalists seeking the ouster of Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni. Last year, the Ugandan government sent troops to eastern Congo, where it says the ADF have rebels. The ADF and the Interahamwe, as the Hutu rebels are known, have not publicly announced any form of cooperation. Uganda is also fighting another rebellion by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in the country's north. The Ugandan government accuses Sudan of supporting both the ADF and the LRA.

Germany keeps up pressure on Arizona to waive execution

BONN (AP) — The German government made another last-minute appeal to the governor of Arizona even after she refused to delay the execution of a convicted German murderer, but without success, officials said Wednesday. Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer telephoned Gov. Jane Dee Hull shortly after she decided Tuesday that the execution should go ahead, but she "was not receptive to the arguments made by the German side," the foreign ministry said. Chancellor Gerhard Schröder also called Hull late Tuesday arguing against the death penalty for Walter LaGrand, 37, who was sentenced to die Wednesday in the Arizona gas chamber. Germany has no death penalty. Germany took its case to world court Tuesday, prompting the court to urge Arizona to stay the execution after the state clemency board urged a 60-day reprieve for LaGrand. But state Justice Minister Janet Napolitano rejected the court's recommendation. LaGrand's brother Karl was executed last week, the first German to be put to death in the United States since World War II. Both were convicted of fatally stabbing bank manager Kenneth Hartsock during a botched robbery in 1982.

Police smash huge ring of art thieves in southern France

BORDEAUX, France (AFP) — A major ring of art thieves targeting castles and luxury homes across southern France has been smashed in a swoop involving 300 officers, police in this southwestern city said Wednesday. The operation launched at dawn Tuesday netted some 400 cubic metres of antique furniture, paintings, sculptures and jewellery stashed across southwest and southern France, with police continuing the search for more looted goods Wednesday. Seventy people were brought in for questioning, including suspected burglars, receivers and dealers in second-hand goods and antiques.

Leather jackets now prohibited under Taliban's Islamic laws

KABUL (AP) — Taliban soldiers used knives to slash the leather jackets of young men in Kabul Wednesday, saying leather jackets were prohibited under Islam. Eyewitnesses said that Taliban troops stopped mostly young men in the congested Khair Khana neighbourhood in northern Kabul and in central Ferozgha neighbourhood. The soldiers ripped the jackets off the men, slashed the jackets with sharp knives before throwing them on the road and warning the offender that Islam prohibited leather jackets, said the eyewitnesses. No one could be reached for comment from the Taliban's religious affairs ministry or its ministry of vice and virtue, the ministry responsible for upholding the many Taliban edicts. Since taking power in Kabul in 1996 and imposing their brand of harsh Islamic laws, the Taliban have banned music, video cassette recorders, television, cameras and books published outside of Afghanistan. They also have banned brown paper bags fearing they may be made of recycled copies of the Koran. Women have been forbidden from wearing white socks. A store owner in Kabul, who gave his name only as Akbar, said that the price of leather jackets have fallen in the last two days from 1.6 million Afghanis (\$36) to 1.2 million Afghanis (\$27). "We are very worried because more than 300 people make their money from selling leather products," said Akbar. However, it wasn't immediately clear whether all leather products were considered contrary to Islam or whether it was specifically leather jackets. Afghanistan, a beleaguered country that has been ravaged by two decades of war, exports some of its leather products to Russia. The route runs from Kabul, to the western province of Herat, through Turkmenistan in central Asia and then to Russia. The Taliban rule about 90 per cent of Afghanistan and their opponents the remaining 10 per cent.

Pro-Indonesian groups accuse rebels of taking E. Timor hostages

DILI, Indonesia (AP) — Pro-Indonesian fighters in troubled East Timor accused rival independence guerrillas Wednesday of taking hundreds of civilian villagers hostage.

Police said they were investigating the claim but could not confirm it.

Guerrilla sources were not immediately available for comment.

A prominent pro-Indonesian commander, Eurico Gueteres, alleged that members of the rebel Falintil guerrilla group rounded up about 100 families from Maubara town, 50 kilometres west of East Timor's capital of Dili, Monday.

Gueteres said the hostage-taking was retaliation

for a series of attacks by pro-Indonesian groups on rebel forces wanting independence.

Police said that about 500 villagers in Maubara have taken shelter in a local government building following a clash Monday between rival groups.

Indonesia invaded East Timor in 1975 and annexed it a year later. Years of human rights abuses and guerrilla warfare followed, but Jakarta began easing its policy on the region after the May ouster of authoritarian President Suharto.

Indonesia has offered to grant East Timor independence if the majority of the half-island territory's 850,000 people reject an autonomy plan that would

give it powers of self-rule while remaining part of the Indonesian republic.

Indonesia now discussing the autonomy plan at U.N.-sponsored talks with Portugal, East Timor's former colonial ruler.

Pro-Indonesian civilian militiamen, some of whom have been armed by the Indonesian military, feel betrayed by the government's willingness to grant independence. There have been sporadic clashes with separatists.

Wednesday, President B.J. Habibie said the planned opening of an Australian consulate in Dili should be delayed.

Pro-Indonesian militia have threatened Australian diplomats and journalists.

Tiananmen victims petition Chinese parliament

BEIJING (AFP) — The families of those killed in the 1989 Tiananmen square crackdown have lobbied China's National People's Congress (NPC) to revise the official version of events when it meets Friday.

The June fourth victims dialogue delegation group called on the NPC to "settle accounts with history, start afresh, reinstate political reform, guarantee citizens' rights and implement democratic constitutionalism," a letter from the group issued through the New York-based Human Rights in China Wednesday.

"Thousands of families lost loved ones. Tens of thousands were injured or disabled. This was the most ruthless act of peace-time violence in China's last 100 years," the letter to Chinese President Jiang Zemin and other NPC members said.

The group was formed by relatives of those killed when People's Liberation Army troops brutally suppressed a student-led protest in Tiananmen square in June 1989.

It is headed by Beijing philosophy professor Ding Zilin, who became one of China's most outspoken rights activists after her teenage son was gunned down by Chinese troops on the evening of June 3, 1989.

Relatives called for an investigation committee to be set up charged with publi-

cising the death toll and the names of those killed and for arrears to be paid to the families of those killed in the massacre.

Beijing has never given an official figure for how many died in the repression.

Among the activists preparing to lobby the NPC was the outlawed opposition China Democracy Party (CDP), the Hong Kong-based information centre of human rights and democratic movement in China reported.

The CDP would also call for the reversal of the Tiananmen verdict, as well as the release of all political prisoners and the return of dissidents in exile, it said.

Meanwhile, a group of 44 dissidents from China's northeastern provinces was planning to push for the abolition of the reeducation through labour sentence during the NPC annual session.

The long-standing practice enables authorities to hand down labour camp sentences of up to three years without trial, and is frequently used to silence political dissent.

The Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the advisory body to the NPC, opened its annual session Wednesday with a tight security clampdown which included the hauling off of two onlookers who had had their bags searched.

"The woman and man had-

n't done anything in particular, but the police asked to search their bags and apparently found something they didn't like," said one man on the scene.

A security clampdown is an annual feature in the lead up to both bodies, attracting protests and petitioners eager to have their concerns addressed.

The past year has been particularly marked by growing social unrest as the massive economic reforms launched by Premier Zhu Rongji at the last NPC resulted in the closure of thousands of China's ailing state-owned enterprises and millions of redundancies.

In southern China's Guangdong province, activist Miao Xike, arrested by police during last year's NPC after staging a one-man protest on Tiananmen square, was once again detained by police Wednesday.

He was hauled away from Tiananmen square in March of last year after shouting slogans urging greater respect for citizen's rights and attempting to unfurl a banner that read "CPC give us back our human right," referring to the Communist Party of China.

Miao had recently announced plans to seek official recognition for the Chinese Rights Party, of which he was the founder and sole member.



File photo dated Dec. 9, 1998, shows 28-year-old Cambodian Sam Vishna looking at a mixture of brown and white skulls that make up a map of Cambodia at Tuol Sleng (S-21 prison) Museum, the former high school turned prison by the Khmer Rouge during the Pol Pot regime where more than seventeen thousand men, women and children were held before taken to the killing fields to be executed. A United Nations panel has recommended the establishment of a new international tribunal to try senior Khmer Rouge leaders for their role in the Cambodian genocide. Sam Vishna's father, older brother and sister were all killed at the killing fields during 1976 (AFP photo)

Cambodian PM warns on Khmer Rouge trial

PHNOM PENH (R) — Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen Wednesday appeared to rule out an international tribunal for Khmer Rouge leaders held responsible for their 1970s "killing fields" reign of terror.

Hun Sen said efforts to bring leaders of the Khmer Rouge to trial could create panic among members of the group who have already surrendered and shatter Cambodia's recently found peace.

Hun Sen said in a letter to U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan that Cambodia was considering setting up a South African-style Truth and Reconciliation Commission to investigate almost 30 years of conflict since 1970.

"We have never rejected the accountability of the Khmer Rouge leaders for the crimes of genocide in Cambodia," Hun Sen said in the letter, released by the government in Phnom Penh.

"We just want... to caution that any decision to bring the Khmer Rouge leaders to justice must also take into full

account Cambodia's need for peace, national reconciliation and economic development," he said.

Earlier Wednesday Foreign Minister Hor Namhong said he would travel to New York next week for talks with Annan on a U.N. proposal for an international tribunal for Khmer Rouge leaders.

The U.N. report has not been released but the New York Times said it proposed an international tribunal to try a dozen former Khmer Rouge leaders and a separate Cambodian truth commission to consider all other cases.

The report was drawn up by team of legal experts appointed after a 1997 request from the government for help in setting up a tribunal to investigate the 1975-79 period of Khmer Rouge rule when an estimated 1.7 million people were killed.

But Hun Sen appeared to rule out an international tribunal any time soon, repeating warnings that a quick trial could lead to renewed conflict.

"If improperly and heed-

lessly conducted, the trials of Khmer Rouge leaders would panic other Khmer Rouge officers and its rank and file, who have already surrendered, into turning back to the jungle and renewing guerrilla war," he said.

Former Khmer Rouge fighters, who kept their weapons when they surrendered, have warned of trouble if attempts are made to arrest their leaders. The government has let them live freely in former strongholds.

Hun Sen also repeated his view that an investigation of the Khmer Rouge should cover the whole period of conflict from 1970 to 1998, not just the 1975-79 period of Khmer Rouge rule.

A broadening of the time-frame could implicate the United States, which launched a massive bombing campaign against Cambodia during the Vietnam war which analysts argue fuelled the rise of the Khmer Rouge.

China and Thailand backed the Khmer Rouge after their early 1979 ouster by Vietnamese forces.

British balloonists to cross Vietnam at night

HANOI (AFP) — A team of round-the-world British balloonists will cross over Vietnamese airspace at about 11:00 p.m. (1600 GMT) Wednesday, Vietnamese aviation officials said.

The Cable and Wireless balloon is expected to cross the Lao-Vietnamese border near the head of the Ho Chi Minh trail and will exit Vietnamese airspace at a longitude of 102 degrees east and a latitude of 16 degrees north.

The civil aviation authority of Vietnam told AFP the balloon was expected to fly at about 30,000 feet.

The flight path chosen will cross over the narrowest strip of Vietnamese territory, just south of the 17th Parallel

which formerly divided North and South Vietnam before the war which ended in 1975.

British round-the-world balloonists Andy Elson and Colin Prescott passed north of Bangkok at 0500 GMT Wednesday and were preparing to cross into Laos.

But Lao officials contacted by telephone from here could not confirm the report.

Mission control in London said earlier that Elson and Prescott were not worried about being overtaken by rival balloon, Breitling Orbiter III, piloted by Swiss balloonist Bertrand Piccard and his British partner Brian Jones, which took off from the Alps Monday.

The British pair are busy

trying to avoid straying into Chinese airspace as they fly over southeast Asia.

Beijing, angered that an earlier failed round-world bid by British tycoon Richard Branson flew into its airspace without permission, has refused them permission to enter its territory.

Early Saturday morning, the two, who took off from south-east Spain on Feb. 17, smashed the 233 hour and 55 minute record set by Piccard in 1998.

Meanwhile, the Breitling Orbiter III balloon was flying over Morocco Wednesday in a bid to catch rapid jet streams over Mauritania, the project's managers said in Geneva.

Singer Dusty Springfield dies at 59

LONDON (R) — Dusty Springfield, the 1960s British pop star famous for her husky voice and blonde beehive hairdo, has died at the age of 59, her agent said Wednesday.

Springfield, who had fought a long battle against breast cancer, died Tuesday night at her home in Henley-on-Thames, west of London, agent Paul Fenn said. Her cancer had first been detected in 1994.

Born Mary O'Brien in London, she teamed up in the early 1960s with her brother Tom to form the Springfields, which became one of the country's top pop and folk acts.

Once described as Britain's finest white soul singer, Springfield's 1963 solo debut "I only want to be with you" is

now a pop classic.

Worldwide success came in 1966, with "You don't have to say you love me," which sold a million copies to become her only British number one hit.

In 1968, she moved to Memphis, Tennessee, where she recorded "Dusty in Memphis," regarded by some critics as one of the decade's finest albums. At the same time she released her classic single "Son of a preacher man."

After disappearing from the charts, Springfield let slip in a 1975 newspaper interview a veiled admission that she was bisexual and moved to Los Angeles.

She recorded little, preferring to spend time with tennis star Billie Jean King and cam-

paign for animal rights.

In the 1980s, she found renewed success when she teamed up with Britain's Pet Shop Boys, who persuaded her to duet with them on their hit single "What have I done to deserve this?"

The group also wrote the theme song to "Scandal," the film of one of Britain's most notorious political scandals of the 1960s, which also became a hit for Springfield.

In May last year, Springfield announced a financial deal in Los Angeles under which she would get millions of dollars in exchange for future royalties from her hits.

Just two months ago, Springfield was honoured by Britain, being granted an OBE (Officer of the Order of the British Empire).

Expert says Y2k may affect medical devices

MANILA (R) — A millennium bug expert said Wednesday some hospital equipment, including life-support systems, may stop functioning at the stroke of 2000.

Randy Boback, of the Network Consulting Group of Canada, told delegates of the second global Y2k summit in Manila that some hospital devices had been identified to run into problems starting on Jan. 1, 2000.

The millennium bug,

called Y2k, is a programming flaw in computers that may cause them to crash on Jan. 1, 2000, causing widespread confusion and chaos.

While some problems would have relatively low impact on patients' health, some could be a source of concern, he said.

"The areas where we are concerned are long-term care and where analysis and life-support on an ongoing basis are required," Boback said.

"Some items will cause a

delay in services. Others will cause a longer-term harm, and some might cause some kind of critical issue," He did not elaborate.

Boback said the majority of the equipment that would encounter Y2k problems centred on clinical laboratory, radiology and patient care systems but these should not critically affect the patients.

"None of them tend to be critical and they can be replaced by manual methods or by old-fashioned

good doctoring," he said, adding these could be upgraded within the remaining 10 months to 2000.

Surgical procedures are also relatively safe from the Y2k bug.

"The loss of a limb will require a good surgeon, but most of these devices are mechanical in nature, they do not require high level of intelligence, and they are not time-sensitive," he said.

Boback said some devices could not be tested if they would work or not at the

turn of the millennium "because we do not know how to put the dates in."

"There's a certain degree of uncertainty in what devices will or will not work because of that," he said.

Boback said, for example, a brand of blood analyser that looks for a complete count of white blood cells had invalidated all inputs with a "00" date. He did not elaborate on its implication.

Croatia readies for WWII trial, reckoning with past

ZAGREB (R) — The World War II crimes trial in post-Communist Croatia opens in a Zagreb court Thursday amid a clamour of interest from diplomats, media and human rights officials.

All will be keeping close tabs on the trial of Dinko Sakic, a former concentration camp commander, to see how it is conducted and whether Croatia is finally coming to terms with its fascist past.

But the 76-year-old defendant is unlikely to appear at the start of his trial after falling ill Tuesday night.

Sakic was taken to Rebro hospital in Zagreb after he vomited, fainted and suffered very high blood pressure overnight, his lawyer Ivan Kern told Reuters Wednesday.

"According to the latest information, Sakic will be transferred to a prison hospital today, but as far as I

can judge I don't think he will be capable of attending the main hearing tomorrow," Kern said.

A court spokesman said the trial would start on schedule with or without Sakic, and a decision would then be taken on whether to postpone it.

Sakic commanded the notorious Jasenovac concentration camp and was a deputy at nearby Stara Gradiska camp in 1942-45, when Croatia was ruled by the Nazi-backed Ustashe regime that brutally persecuted Jews, Serbs, gypsies and anti-fascist Croats.

The 35-page indictment says Sakic was responsible for the deaths of at least 2,000 people in Jasenovac. The prosecutor took five months to review documentary evidence and question 46 witnesses, many of them camp survivors, to

compile the case.

Only one senior Ustashe official was ever tried and sentenced in federal Yugoslavia, in the 1980s, and the Sakic trial is the first since Croatia became independent in 1991.

Efraim Zuroff of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre, which tracks Nazi war criminals, will observe the Zagreb trial along with reporters from some 50 media organisations who will follow proceedings in the grand chamber of the county court.

"We think the trial has a historic significance... The way it is handled will be a precise indication and proof that Croatia intends to clear up its past," Tommy Baer, head of the Jewish group B'nai B'rith, told Slobodna Dalmacija daily last week.

"The public, Croatian and foreign,

is keen to have him sentenced and to get the whole thing over with," said sociologist Slaven Letica. But he said the complex issue of Croatia's relation to its past goes beyond the courtroom and will take more than a simple trial to disentangle.

Sakic was extradited from Argentina last June after he discussed his past in a television interview. Like many Nazis who fled Europe for South America after 1945, he had lived there quietly with his family for 50 years.

His wife Nada was sent to Croatia a few months later on similar charges but her case was dropped for lack of evidence.

"I can only hope that this (will be a fair trial) but frankly, the release of Nada has aroused considerable anxiety regarding the judicial process," said Zuroff.

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Israeli elections and peace northwards

ISRAEL IS considering various scenarios for its eventual withdrawal from south Lebanon ranging from full unilateral withdrawal to reducing its occupied cordon to a "mere" three kilometres wide. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu speculated on Tuesday that should he be re-elected in the May polls, he would realise full withdrawal from south Lebanon through a deal with Syria within a year, provided the price is right, or affect a unilateral withdrawal without such an accord. Labour leader Ehud Barak also pledged a complete withdrawal by June of next year if he is declared Israel's new premier come May 17. But it was retired General Amnon Shahak of the Centrist Party under General Yitzhak Mordechai who pointed out the obvious Tuesday. Shahak said that without a peace agreement with Syria, the Israeli northern border will never be quiet.

There is, therefore, a growing consensus in Israel that a secure and safe Israeli border in the north can never be realised without a peace pact with Syria. Even the most modest and humble observers on both sides of the fence reached a similar conclusion, many years ago. All the killing and destruction on both sides could have been avoided if only Israel took earlier note of the obvious and pursued peace with Syria not only for the sake of the safety of its northern border but also for the benefit of its northeastern frontier with Syria.

It is ironic that the Israeli prime minister has yet to comprehend that without a comprehensive and just peace with all the Arab parties the peace treaties it has concluded with Egypt and Jordan will continue to be strained. Sooner or later Israel will have to make peace with Syria and Lebanon, and the sooner this is done the better for all sides. Despite all these obvious facts, Netanyahu still searches for a peace deal with Syria which is not "very costly." By that he means full withdrawal from the Golan Heights, something which appears repugnant to his ideology. On the other hand, we all know only too well that Syria will never strike a deal with Israel short of the complete liberation of its occupied territories. And why should it?

We presume that if Barak wins the upcoming elections, he will follow in the footsteps of the late Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin who was on the verge of concluding an equitable accord with Damascus. If Mordechai wins, he too will be open-minded on such a settlement with Syria. Only Netanyahu appears adamant on the extent of his willingness to make peace with all his Arab neighbours. The Israeli voters will have to decide, therefore, on whom they can pin more hope for peace when they cast their votes in May.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Taher Adwan said the Iraqi situation is moving towards a war of attrition with the U.S. and U.K.; a logical consequence of the crisis. The problem is no longer an Iraqi-Kuwaiti crisis, or an argument over UNSCOM's performance, rather it is a direct confrontation between Iraq and both Western countries, argued Adwan. Neither the no-fly zone in southern and northern Iraq nor the plans for "liberating Iraq" were initiated by the U.N. Security Council, said the writer. These developments in the Iraqi situation require in turn new international and regional political ideas to deal with what has been happening in the region since 1991. "Although the Security Council, along with Arab and non-Arab countries are 'out of the picture,' they must find a certain mechanism to meet such a war of attrition, establish comprehensive solutions and preserve peace and security in the region. The situation of 'silence' against the military escalation in Iraq will cause more losses for the Iraqis, and talk about changing the regime there is an unrealistic objective, said Adwan.

Al Dustour's Yasser Za'atreh quoted the London-based Al Quds Al Arabi reporting a secret Arab Gulf decision to freeze weapon deals with the U.S. and U.K. in response to the drop in oil prices. Za'atreh said if the report is true, the decision will be the most important one taken, in efforts to confront the U.S. "conspiracy," which aims to destroy oil prices and then destroy the Gulf economies. Although there was no official statement about the issue, it is nonsense to think that the Gulf states were not aware of the reason behind the drop in the prices, added Za'atreh. The writer said that in an article, Iraqi President Saddam Hussein discovered the "scandal" and put the blame on the "American-Zionist" powers and the Gulf countries, which, according to the Iraqi president, were partners in the conspiracy. Saddam Hussein's article included an important analysis of attempts to destroy oil prices by establishing the International Energy Agency and approving a "terrifying" storage policy, which increased the U.S. oil reserve to 6 billion barrels in 1998, according to Za'atreh. The problem is that the U.S. is not satisfied with what it has done to the Arab and Gulf economies, but wants to blackmail them through weapon deals, he said. It is almost obvious that there is a general Arab and Gulf problem concerning the oil prices, and it seems that all possible regulations are useless, said Za'atreh.

Fund-raising: Will it succeed in our society?

I HAVE always believed that fund-raising is an important solution to the financial difficulties our universities, like most universities worldwide, have been passing through for some time now. My assumption has always been that there is no reason why fund-raising campaigns in this part of the world ought not yield the expected results. The time has come for me to test the validity of both my belief and assumption.

Before I talk about the fund-raising campaign in which I am currently involved, let me delve into some history, psychology and sociology surrounding the issue.

For sometime, the whole philosophy of fund-raising has been almost entirely absent from our institutional psyche. Our universities, at one point in time, were limited in number. The funds contributed by the state were enough to go around. University administrators then could almost do miracles.

Buildings were built in abundance, the most sophisticated equipment could be easily acquired, and faculty members revelled in grants and conference allowances. I remember some colleagues of mine at a state university where I worked for ten years going to four conferences a year. Somewhat decadent but beneficial nonetheless.

Today the picture is radically (I would say ruthlessly) different. Do you know that one of our biggest problems at the University of Jordan (UJ) is space? Take for example offices for faculty members. How many faculties' members are there in an office? In some colleges and departments one, which is the ideal situation. A faculty member needs the privacy of the office to prepare for his/her classes and grade papers in peace. But he/she also needs it for consultation hours with students.

Have you ever witnessed two professors (one of them with a particularly loud voice) talking to their students simultaneously: one debating a matter in linguistics, another in literature? Chomsky and Chaucer could intertwine in ways you cannot imagine. And what if one professor is a native speaker of German and the other of Chinese, as the case is in the department I am presently chairing? Very interesting indeed.

There are many cases at my university in which three, four, and — yes — five faculty members share an office. Imagine what the office hour is like: in a department of foreign languages, it is a global beehive. Don't think I am joking.

Forget about offices and professors; some may think we are meandering in the realm of luxury here. Let's talk about students, the cornerstone of the educational experience — the customers whom we aim to serve to the best of our ability. What are their classes like? Beeswax, again. Of course, there are sections in which you find 25 or 30 students (one out of twenty, that is). The vast majority of classes are packed. In the language skills classes, with which I am amply familiar, instead of the ideal number of 25 or 30, we have in most of our classes 60, 70 and at times 80 students.

Why? We do not have enough lecture halls. It is as simple as that. We have just been through an add-drop period, and getting a larger room from the registrar for your ever-increasing class is like asking Benjamin Netanyahu to give you East Jerusalem back. Again, I am not joking.

I have digressed. I was saying that our university administrators, in the good old days, did not even think about fund-raising. State funds and grants of sorts were ample enough. Besides, we have been brought up in a

culture where the government is supposed to be a provider for everyone.

What is the government for after all? A government is like a parent in our society. A couple of decades ago, when my friend and I were debating our wish to pursue our studies, the matter for my friend was settled. He said, "My father brought me into this world; he should take care of my studies?" The same logic applies to government in our part of the world.

This is an important historic, cultural and sociological fact.

But historic, cultural and sociological facts do change over time. When the number of our state universities increased tremendously, state funds became meagre indeed. The number increased some more, and the funds began to be more meagre. What do you do? Well, do what others do. What? Partnerships with industry. Where are the industries in our part of the world with which we can have partnerships? And are we qualified enough as academic institutions for such partnerships? Well, what do you do? You have to look for funds from institutions other than the state.

Where? Organisations abroad? Where else? Well, may be institutions and individuals from within the country.

But isn't asking for funds like begging? Another sociological fact. You can raise funds for charity or for needy or handicapped people, but for an educational institution? Who would want to donate? And they may do it for the science or business colleges. Interests and connections play a part in this. But who would do it for the poor — maybe, in the eyes of some, even obsolete or irrelevant — scholars and students in the humanities, social sciences, and languages? Despite these reservations, some of us at the UJ think that fund-raising is possible; and

View from Academia



Dr. Ahmad Y. Majdoubeh

we think that some (perhaps many) in our society or country are willing to donate to the social sciences, arts, humanities and languages.

I am involved in a campaign for support of languages. The Language Centre at the UJ is presently entrusted with the task of teaching language communication skills in both Arabic and English (and this is a very recent development) to all incoming university students — over five thousand of them. The basic argument is that language communication skills empower students. For one thing, such skills help them become more assertive, and, perhaps, happier and more fulfilled. Psychologically, a person who can express is healthier than one who does not. For another, they enable them to have access to a wealth of knowledge in these two vital languages, thus deepening their knowledge of their subjects and of disciplines beyond. Furthermore, and perhaps equally importantly, they increase their chances of employment tremendously. Human resources development (for both women and men) is a must in today's world, and UJ's Language Centre aims to do that, precisely.

The university does support the centre but it cannot provide it with much that it needs. Much necessary equipment is lacking: space is a big problem; offices of instructors are unbelievably inadequate; and students' lecture halls are packed. We need computers, educational audio-visual material, modern labs, etc.

Though neither experts nor experienced with fund-raising, we aim to raise the necessary funds needed for our noble objectives. We aim to seek out the support of individuals and institutions who believe in student empowerment and human resources development. Some individuals in our society are computer literate, Internet literate, literate in the most sophisticated of technologies. Others, to the needs of many of whom the Language Centre plans to cater, have seen computers only in pictures and have heard about the Internet only second and third-hand. It is time that such deserving students (many of whom come from very unprivileged areas) had access to what others have access to. Equality of opportunity is a must.

Will fund-raising efforts in our society succeed? Will some among us contribute to the poverty-stricken disciplines of the humanities, social sciences, and languages? We certainly hope so.

There must be some good souls out there who are willing to chip in. Our higher education institutions in general need your support.

I read in every issue of The Chronicle of Higher Education news about donors to universities who contribute in the hundreds of thousands and in millions. Will we soon start reading about fellow countrymen and friends residing in the country doing the same, on top of the few — very few — that is, who contribute regularly?

A tale of two cities

PATRIOTIC THOUGH misguided people in this part of the world sometimes go overboard in their economic ambitions. For instance, how many times have you heard a Jordanian talking about Amman as "the Singapore of the Middle East," or an equally enthusiastic Lebanese referring to his country's capital as "the Paris of the Arab World"? I have never been to Singapore, but I do not have the slightest doubt that it bears little resemblance to the capital of Jordan.

As for the supposed parallel between Beirut and Paris, knowing the two cities leads me to conclude that among the few similarities between them is the presence of lots of people in both who are Arabic/French bilingual. Looked at in another way, think of what the people of Singapore would feel if you told them their city was the Amman of the Far East. (The reaction of the Parisians to their city being described as the Beirut of Europe does not bear thinking about.) Don't get me wrong, Amman and Beirut are both places with a lot going for them, and despite many problems and drawbacks, they have some good — though different — things to offer businesspeople, whether local or international. My problem is with those in the two capitals' public and private sectors alike who are unreasonably and unrealistically boasting their cities. OK, maybe Beirut in comparison with other places in the Arab World is a bit like a European capital, and perhaps parts of Amman have an antiseptic charm reminiscent of the House that Lee Kuan Yew built, with no wads of chewing gum littering the streets. However, on the

Developing World



Riad al Khouri

whole these two Middle East capitals are problem-ridden, with large poor areas and most of the manifestations of underdevelopment.

That is why I found refreshing the Lebanese Minister of Finance George Corm's statement last week that Beirut would never become a financial centre for the region. Instead of spouting propaganda about the Lebanese capital being the region's financial hub, he instead insisted that such a pretension was one of the causes of the country's economic crunch. Talking about the large debt inherited from his predecessor, he scathingly commented that the country had "embarked on a reconstruction scheme and the dream of regaining our past glory." However, he asked rhetorically, could that happen when "the practical circumstances that made that possible in the past no longer exist?" He answered in the negative, concluding that many of Lebanon's problems "stem from the costly drive to regain that role, which

the present circumstances will not permit." For those of you not familiar with the Lebanese economy over the past few years, the end of the civil war in 1991 was followed by a considerable amount of reconstruction. The bad news is that this has landed the country in considerable internal and external debt, with the economic "growth" needed to allow it to be paid off still a distant prospect. Instead of a "return" of the pre-civil war Beirut, a property bubble and subsequent slump demoralised investors, and the city today is full of fancy projects and grandiose schemes which remain uncompleted or under-utilised. In fact the reconstructed business centre of the city looks like an attractive woman all dressed up with nowhere to go.

Minister Corm's remarks were meant to be provocative and inject a new sense of priorities among the Lebanese. What he and others are calling for is more attention to sectors other than international financial services and expensive urban development. Trying to revive or develop niches in manufacturing and agriculture would be one of the alternatives to assigning Beirut the pseudo-role of the London, New York, or Zurich of the Arab World.

Meanwhile back in Amman, our fourth year of slump and the collapse of hopes for a peace dividend have made people increasingly realistic. In the current state of the economy, there is absolutely no risk of our minister of industry or central bank governor declaring that, say, Wadi Tel/Gardens Street is to become the Silicon Valley of the region or that Shmeisani is going to

emerge as the Wall Street of the Arab World. On the whole, the end of such cliché-mongering is a good thing, with our government officials' public statements coming ever more down to earth. Still, it would be nice to have a Jordanian George Corm stand up and deliver some home truths about the country's economy. Alas, there would be no shortage of topics about which to be scathing: water, traffic, foreign investment, education, vocational training, and insurance are among the few that come to mind. Take the latter: Making up a scant two per cent of GNP, as compared to five times that level in developed countries, nevertheless insurance suits make up seven per cent of the cases brought before Jordanian courts. This is partly an indication of the unprofessionalism of many in the country's insurance sector. Another sorry statistic concerning Jordanian insurance is the existence of 26 companies in a country of 4.5 million people and a GNP of not much more than \$7 billion.

Denmark, with an only slightly larger population but a vastly larger economy has three insurance companies. It may not be fair to compare Amman's insurers to Copenhagen's, and I should also mention that the Lebanese insurance sector has some of the same problems as Jordan's. My point is simply that this business, like so many others in Jordan and other parts of the Middle East, is in bad shape and ripe for extensive reform and development; and to talk about our economies and capital cities in falsely glowing terms just disguises the problems and delays the solution.

Kosovars and Kurds

By Pascal B. Karmy

IT IS most unfortunate that Western states apply double standards vis-a-vis the Kurds of Turkey on the one hand and the Albanians of Kosovo on the other. They support the national aspirations and rights of the Albanians while they brand the Kurds of Turkey outlaws and terrorists.

NATO has gone to the extent of threatening to launch air strikes against Serbia if it does not bow to the wishes of Europe and America.

The Kurds of Turkey count about fifteen million people while the Albanians of Kosovo count less than two million. This is not to say that the Albanians of Kosovo should not have their own autonomy, but that the Kurds deserve likewise to have self-rule within the jurisdiction of the Turkish state.

Jonathan Randall, author on several books on the Middle East, has said that: "It is surprising that eighty years since the fall of the Ottoman Empire two peoples (the Albanians and the Kurds) who were living on the margin of the Ottoman empire are now in the forefront of current events." And he added that: "The Kosovo Albanians who had been frustrated since the beginning of this century... will at least obtain in Rambouillet some of their rights, while the Kurds are again being sacrificed by the interna-

tional community for selfish purposes." Thus the Kosovo Albanians are now more fortunate than the Kurds of Turkey.

Why then, seeing as their numbers are so great, do the Kurds not have a state of their own? It may be remembered that the Kurds are scattered across Turkey, Iran, Iraq with a few thousands in Russia and Syria. Moreover they count about 600,000 in Europe and there are thousands in the U.S., Canada, and Australia. At one time in history the great powers thought of establishing a state for the Kurds and for a short time Kurdistan existed. The great powers, however, rejected the idea of Kurdistan after having realised how scattered they were in neighbouring states which of course was an obstacle to the creation of such a Kurdish state.

Protagonists of human rights claim that the Kurds of Turkey have been subjected to oppression and repression by the Turkish security forces particularly after the PKK launched its fight for freedom and independence. The recent capture, imprisonment and perhaps eventual hanging of Ocalan by Turkey will surely not solve the Kurdish problem; on the contrary it will exacerbate it.

The question that should be asked is: Why are Western states, including the U.S., considering granting wide autonomy to the Kosovo Albanians, who count less than two million

people, while they are totally ignoring the rights and national aspirations of the Kurds of Turkey, who count about fifteen million people if not more. The answer goes without saying: Turkey is an ally of the U.S. and is a member of the NATO alliance. But is this the justice of the so-called New World Order? To ignore the oppressed and to implicitly if not explicitly encourage the big and mighty to continue the 'oppression'? I have always claimed that the right of resistance and rebellion against injustice and oppression is a God-given natural right, just as the Europeans resisted and fought the Nazis during occupation. And it must be remembered that most of the states, if not all, in Asia, Africa and the Americas obtained their freedom and independence after long struggles and resistance against imperialist powers.

Ocalan is now in the hands of the Turks, and it is hoped that he will get a fair trial according to the rules of justice. He must be given the full opportunity to defend himself and be allowed to appoint the lawyers of his choice to defend him.

The writer was an advocate in Palestine in 1944 and for many years legal officer at UNRWA headquarters in Beirut and Vienna

Living like human beings

Jerusalem Life

HUSSEIN TIRAWI, from Ramallah, was five in 1995 when he was involved in a bad car accident which left all him unable to speak or move his organs.

Since then his mother has been taking him to a specialised clinic, the Ellen Hospital in West Jerusalem for physiotherapy treatment. He has been able to regain movement in most of his organs. Today Hussein is nine, he still has a speech problem and finds it hard to keep his balance.

Last week Hussein's mother as usual took her son for his treatment armed with a valid travel permit. She has used the permit issued and reissued every three months to enter Jerusalem. As she has done this three times a week for the last four years it didn't enter her mind that she would have a problem in crossing the Israeli military checkpoint near Al Ram north of Jerusalem. But when she arrived an Israeli soldier refused to allow her and her son entry. The reason, a new hermetic closure had been placed on the Palestinian territories because of the celebrations of Purim in Israel.

Purim is not a national Israeli holiday nor a religious holiday. It is similar to Halloween in the States in which children dress up in funny costumes and go disguised to community parties and get together. This extra tight closure approved by the new Israeli Defence Minister Moshe Arens in effect makes existing travel passes ineffective.

Israeli member of Knesset Yossi Sarid complained about the denial of the sick Hussein Tirawi and his mother from going for treatment. An Israeli official who admitted that Mrs. Tirawi has a valid travel permit explained that this permit is not valid during this special closure. The only Palestinians allowed to Jerusalem are those who can get yet a new permit for such occasions. And the official Israeli spokesman added that since the young Tirawi boy's health was not critical the Israeli army would not issue the necessary permit! Just like that! This is how the "only democracy in the Middle East" defends its continued apartheid policy, this time unabashedly defending a policy that barred a sick and disabled child from

getting necessary treatment. These travel agonies are not restricted to Palestinians. Before the latest closure a famous Egyptian singer was invited to sing in Palestine. In a major coup, the Jericho Winter Festival succeeded in signing up Hani Shaker, who is to young Arab teenagers what the Beatles were to American teenagers in the 1960s. Shaker and his 30 piece band arrived at Gaza International Airport at 8 a.m. on February 24 the night before the opening festivities. Organisers felt that such an important singer would be able to go through passport control and travel the two hour journey with enough time to get to Jericho where thousands of fans were anxiously waiting for him. Eleven hours after their plane landed in Gaza, a tired and humiliated singer and band arrived in Jericho and decided that they would not be able to do anything that night much to the disappointment of over thousands of Palestinians who had come to see the opening night ceremonies and meet their idol.

Despite the disappointment Palestinians packed out the new Jericho stadium the following night and greatly enjoyed the show. Hani Shaker included two new songs written just for the occasion. A young teenager climbed on stage and kissed the Egyptian star which made 15,000 teenage fans (75 per cent of whom were teenage girls) go crazy.

Hani Shaker, who spoke in a press conference about the humiliations he faced from the Israelis, ended his concert with one of his most famous songs entitled "Mistake," leaving his fans worrying whether he was referring to the humiliation of coming to Palestine while the Israelis are still in charge of border crossings.



Daoud Kuttab

The British departure and the mufti of Jerusalem

Newly uncovered secret documents reveal that in 1949 the British government was prepared to break any moral barrier to save its retreating army in Palestine. Here was a ghostly prelude to 50 years of Arab/Israeli conflict

By Robert Fisk

AFTER WORLD War II, Palestine was crumbling. A "hell-disaster," Churchill called it. Menachem Begin's Irgun had blown up British headquarters at the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, the British were executing Jewish "terrorists," and the Jews had hanged two kidnapped British army sergeants. The Arabs were determined to destroy the future Jewish state of Israel. The old imperial mandate was in a state of incipient civil war. You have only to open Colonial Office file 537/2643 to understand why, in their moment of agony, the British toyed with the idea of negotiating with an Arab cleric whom they had, only two years earlier, tried to extradite as a war criminal.

Indeed, in 1941 Haj Amin Al Husseini, the grand mufti of Jerusalem, had been chatting to Hitler in Berlin, urging the Reich to prevent the departure of European Jews to Palestine; and two years later he had been helping to raise a Muslim SS battalion in Sarajevo to fight on the Russian front. Later on, claiming ignorance of the Jewish Holocaust, he told the German Foreign Minister Ribbentrop in 1944 that if Jews were to be "removed" from Germany, "it would be infinitely preferable to send them to other countries where they would find themselves under active control [sic], as for example, Poland..."

When he attempted to flee Germany in 1945, the French captured the grand mufti, but allowed him to escape to Egypt. In 1947 he turned up in Lebanon as leader of the Palestinian Arabs, a powerful and influential voice that could pacify — or provoke — an Arab uprising against Britain in its last days of rule in Palestine.

No wonder, then, that the old Colonial Office file was not released under the usual 30-year rule, but kept secret for half a century. Its contents — astonishingly, they were overlooked by historians on their release last month — speak not only of hidden contacts in Cairo, but also of imperial despair in Palestine and, most dramatically, of outrage at

Jewish "reprisals" against Arab civilians which constituted, according to the British High Commissioner, "an offence to civilisation." Indignation and fury permeate the file. So does defeat.

On December 15, 1947, Lieutenant General Sir Alan Cunningham sent a top secret memorandum to the British Colonial Secretary Arthur Creech-Jones, outlining the civil war in Palestine in fearful detail. "Situation now is deteriorating," he wrote, "into a series of reprisals and counter-reprisals between Jews and Arabs, in which many innocent lives are being lost, the tempo of which may accelerate... I have been considering what steps could be taken to mitigate this dangerous situation. As far as the Arabs are concerned it is undoubtedly a fact that word from the mufti in the right quarter is probably now the only chance of inducing them to hold their hand until we have gone."

Haj Amin had arrived in newly independent Lebanon in early October 1947, and the British legation in Beirut immediately set out to discover how much freedom he would be given. The grand mufti's sudden appearance, the legation noted, had not surprised the Lebanese prime minister, Riad Solh, but the Lebanese insisted that "a member of the Sûreté" was in constant attendance on Haj Amin, that his activities would be "controlled and restricted" by the Lebanese and that he "would not be allowed to indulge in any activities directed against British interests." As our diplomats in Beirut were well aware, however, the British Middle East Office in Cairo had already made contact with the man whom Britain and the Allied Forces Command in Europe regarded as a war criminal.

On September 29, our man in Cairo had sent a secret note to the Foreign Office enclosing the report of an interview with the mufti from "an unimpeachable source." The carefully typed notes — presumably from a British intelligence officer — portray a man who realised that disaster faced the Arabs of Palestine. The mufti refused to contemplate the partition of Palestine into Jewish and Arab states. "He was not bargaining with the Zionists about a possession in dispute," says the report. "Palestine, including Jaffa and the Negev, belonged to the Arabs, and he did not recognise the right of anyone to 'offer' them what

was their as a condition of consent to partition. It was like a robber trying to make conditions on which he would return stolen property." Besides, Haj Amin said, "no form of partition... would finally satisfy the Zionists. Whatever they got would merely be a springboard from which to leap on more."

The grand mufti, who had supported the Arab Revolt against British rule in the thirties and had subsequently sought refuge in Iraq after a pro-German coup, then lectured his interviewee in words that must have taken the Briton's breath away. "Put yourselves in the Arabs' place," Haj Amin advised. "Remember yourselves in 1940. Did you ever think of offering the Germans part of Britain on condition that they let you alone in the rest? Of course not, and you never would." The answer to partition or a federal Palestine was "NO, categorically NO." Jews would have the same rights as Arabs in a Palestinian nation, "but the Arabs would never agree to any bestowal on the Zionists of political power or privilege that put them above... the Palestinian state government."

There was no reason why Arabs and the British should not cooperate, Haj Amin said. But common interests "should not deceive the British into thinking that any Arab leader would weaken where Palestine was concerned... Palestinian Arab enmity towards the British was purely political — they hated the policy that had founded... the Zionist national home." If Britain did not support Zionist claims to Palestine, and rejected partition, "she would gain Arab friendship in a moment." But if the British continued their support, "they could never hope for Arab cooperation, for the Arabs would then be cooperating in bringing about their own destruction."

Then, in words which have an ironic historical resonance, the grand mufti talked of the future. "He did not fear the Jews, their Stern, Irgun, Haganah [gangs]. The Arabs might lose at first, they would have many losses, but in the end they must win." The Zionists "will eventually crumble into nothing, and he did not fear the result, unless of course Britain or America... intervened, and even then the Arabs would fight and the Arab World would be perpetually hostile."

When his British visitor suggested that the Arabs might do better to accept part of Palestine rather than

risk losing all, Haj Amin replied: "Who are we? A handful of exiles. Nothing. But we shall never give in or surrender our principles no matter what bribe is offered."

Should the British talk directly to Haj Amin? As fighting continued in Palestine, the British legation in Beirut reported to the Foreign Office on November 27 that Haj Amin "no longer regards us as Arab public enemy No. 1" but "if a decision unfavourable to the Arabs is reached at the United Nations... it is probable that the ex-mufti [sic] will be exposed to pressure from his extremist followers... Contact even of a most informal sort with British officials might serve as a safety valve." The British memorandum, marked "Secret," adds that although Haj Amin's "dubious past renders the prospect of even unofficial contact with him distasteful," it could not be denied "that he enjoys very considerable prestige and influence and he may still play a part in the future government of Palestine." The mufti had "learnt a lesson through backing the wrong side in the last war," and "advantage might be taken of his anti-Communist leanings."

Solh had already offered to arrange a meeting between the mufti and a Beirut-based British diplomat called Evans, over cups of tea — Evans had been "non-committal" to the idea — but "I think it would be all to the good for a member of my staff to see him occasionally," the Legation head wrote. It would now pay the British "hand over fist" to exert any influence to avoid a wholesale clash with Palestinian Arabs. Meeting the mufti as "an individual" would not mean "that His Majesty's government had abandoned their principles or condoned the mufti's misguided [sic] past... if... he has had a change of heart, mild and discreet contacts with the British might give him a chance to prove it. If the leopard still the same we shall soon find the sports under his henna."

Beneath this eloquent letter, the British diplomat had added in his own hand the damning remark that the U.S. assistant military attaché in Lebanon had already paid a visit to the mufti. By mid-December, General Cunningham was pleading from Jerusalem for pressure on Haj Amin "to get him to dissuade local Arabs from further violence... while we are still here." But, the High Commissioner noted, "it is clear that we can-

not approach the Arabs without taking parallel action against the Jews. We are, of course, doing all we can to point out to Jews the unmitigated folly of their action which can only end in future bitterness which may well in the end mean disaster for their new state." Jewish claims that their actions were carried out by "dissident groups" had proved to be untrue and "it can be seen that the Jews have inflicted many more casualties on the Arabs than the reverse. Practically all [Jewish] attacks have been against buses or in civilian centres."

And, in a remarkable moment of anger, Cunningham concluded that "we have never at any time on the slightest excuse escaped vociferous and hysterical accusations by Jews that we were people who were prone to brutal reprisals. Now they [the Jews] have themselves come out with reprisals of a kind which would not have crossed the mind of any soldier here, and which are an offence to civilisation."

Cunningham's plea for discussions with the mufti was forwarded to the Foreign Office. Within days, however, the Legation in Beirut was ordered to make no contact with Haj Amin. British MPs had long demanded his trial for war crimes, and so the British departed from Palestine in disgrace, leaving Arab and Jew to fight for the land. Three-quarters of a million Palestinians fled or were expelled from their homes. The Arabs did not eventually win, as Haj Amin had predicted, and the 51-year-old Israeli state did not end in disaster as Cunningham had suggested it might. Israeli spokesman



regularly condemn the mufti for his flirtation with Nazism, and have sought to demonise the Palestinians with his name. But recent research suggests that he was an Arab nationalist rather than a national socialist — his fairest biographer is a former Israeli military governor of the occupied West Bank.

The mufti died in Beirut in 1974, ignored and largely forgotten even in Lebanon. Among the mourners at his funeral was Yasser Arafat.

— The Independent

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Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Jordan Loan Guarantee Corporation hiked operations by around 29 per cent last year

**** THE JORDAN** Loan Guarantee Corporation received 731 inquiries that carried a total value of JD13.8 million last year but the balance of guaranteed loans at the end of 1998 stood at around JD8.7 million, a 28.9 per cent increase over the balance at the end of 1997. Since August 1994 until December 1998 the corporation received a total of 1,760 inquiries that carried a JD33.5 million gross value but the balance of the guaranteed amount was JD17.4 million, said Jamal Salah, the corporation's general manager.

Salah indicated that the services sector accounted for 60.8 per cent of the inquiries followed by the industrial, craft and vocational sector which accounted for 29.2 per cent. At 7.1 per cent and 2.9 per cent, the commercial and agricultural sectors ranked in third and fourth places respectively. 55.2 per cent of the projects were within the Municipality of Greater Amman and the remaining 44.8 per cent were in other parts of the Kingdom.

During 1998, the number of guaranteed loans under execution was 666, 70 per cent of which were in the services sector and 20.4 per cent were in the industrial, craft and vocational sectors. The commercial and agricultural sectors accounted for 8.9 per cent and 0.7 per cent respectively.

Salah revealed that the growth in the number of guaranteed loans under execution last year was 31 per cent over the 1997 figure. He indicated that the value

of credits extended to these loans amounted to JD12.4 million and that the balance of the guaranteed amount stood at JD7.7 million. The average amount for each loan was JD19,000, he said.

The general manager said around 7,000 workers were employed in all the projects. "That is to say, the corporation, by guaranteeing the risks of loans directed to these projects, was able to maintain this side of work opportunities," Salah said noting that 3.2 per cent of the loans guaranteed by the corporation ran into troubles.

As to the programme of export credit guarantee Salah said the corporation received, until the end of last year, 34 inquiries with a JD2.1 million value for the pre shipping stage. Out of this number, 24 loans valued at JD1.78 million were carried out. Thirteen loans for JD850,000 were repaid and the outstanding until now are 11 loans for JD931,000.

The after shipping stage covered five contracts last year for a total amount of JD3.8 million, Salah said. He concluded by preferring to the 1998 closing financial results which showed that the corporation posted JD1.4 million in net carryings last year. It is expected that the net profit will be JD455,000 noting that the corporation's assets rose by 4.4 per cent to JD565,000 and shareholders' equity by 5.1 per cent to JD546,000 (Al Arab Al Yawm).

Commercial electronic trade to hit one trillion dollars by 2003

SINGAPORE (AFP) — Electronic commerce (e-commerce) among companies could exceed one trillion dollars worldwide by 2003, far outstripping consumer spending over the internet, Visa International said Wednesday.

The global credit card company said a survey by Wharton economic forecasting associates group on its behalf showed that Asia would account for nearly 20 per cent of "commercial e-commerce" by 2003.

In a statement, Visa International said the global estimate of one trillion dollars — representing a compound annual growth rate of 69 per cent — is significantly higher than previous forecasts.

By comparison, consumer spending over the internet is forecast at \$100 billion by 2002.

"It is a major indication of the way in which companies will be doing business over the next decade and reveals how electronic commerce has the potential to dramatically reshape the business-to-business mar-

ketplace," the statement said.

The survey covered 17 countries believed to account for 85 per cent of the total market opportunity. In the countries covered, 94 per cent of purchase volume is expected to be focused on just five countries: Britain, France, Germany, Japan and the United States.

The U.S. market represents a staggering 59 per cent of volume, with Europe and Asia roughly splitting the remainder.

Service and manufacturing companies will be the leading users, followed by government and education, financial services and retailers.

"While the Internet currently accounts for 95 per cent of electronic commerce activity, by 2003, 27 per cent will be carried over extranets," the Visa statement said.

Extranets are computer networks that link a company to a supplier or supplier network, creating a related community of specific companies and suppliers, it added.

Construction of industrial port to be completed in two years

AMMAN — The construction work of a JD18 million industrial port at Aqaba is expected to be finalised in the coming two years, an official said Wednesday.

"The project is a part of the government's efforts to prepare the port city of Aqaba to meet the ever increasing number of shipping traffic [importing and exporting]," said Naser Madadbeh, director of the Tender Department at the Ministry of Public Works and Housing.

The project includes high technology controlling systems, safety and loading and unloading facilities to rapidly meet exporting requirements.

The new project also aims at attracting investors to the southern city due to the expected increase in trade in the coming years," he added.

The industrial port will be 47.5 metre long, 25.5 wide and 15 metres depth. It is expected to receive ships carrying as much as 50,000 tonnes of goods a day.

The new port will back the older port in providing speed and flexibility in handling exports and imports," Madadbeh told the Jordan Times.

"The project's cost will be JD2 million for the civil work which will be funded by the European Bank for Investment while the mechanical part [machines and technology] which

costs around JD16 million will be funded by the private sector," he said.

The bid's period is 640 days.

The private sector is expected to play a significant role in the project as it will be the party responsible for managing the new port as well as the older one under certain conditions.

Under the agreement, the party responsible for the port will provide the two ports with the needed maintenance. "The private sector will build the structural

part for the new industrial port," said Madadbeh.

The government has asked a consultancy office to make a feasibility study for the two-year project in order to determine the manner in which the bid will be offered, [BOT or BOO], he added as saying.

The Port of Aqaba in 1991 received a major blow after sanctions were imposed against Iraq for invading Kuwait. Jordan is considered the main outlet for Iraq to the rest of the world.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR THURSDAY, MARCH 4, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) A compromise is possible, but you may not want to give up anything. Think again — you have more than enough. Too much, even. Besides, if you make a generous contribution, you retain more authority. You and your adversary may never agree, on your own. Too many egos involved. A mutual friend brings the perfect new concept.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You work hard for the money, but today it might feel like you're working for free. Actually, you're making points, and that could be even more important. Someone in a position to help your fortune considerably is watching, and taking notes. **GEMINI:** (May 21 to June 21) You are looking very good today, and most likely making a great impression. But again, that could lead to trouble. Looks like everybody wants your time and attention. Instead of picking A or B, a third option that shows up today could be best choice.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) Your intuition should still be good, so use it. A roommate or close family member is in a cantankerous mood. You'll never win by arguing. Instead, take the subtle, roundabout route. Prepare the special meal this person loves tonight, and you may get what you want without saying another word about it.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) There's a little more confusion today, but nowhere near as much as you've been through lately. Things are actually starting to calm down. Although there will still be a few rough spots, the final outcome today should be beneficial. That's especially true if you make up with a person with whom you've been arguing. Forgive and forget.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) One thing's for sure, there'll be lots of surprises today. Don't take anything for granted. Just because it worked once doesn't mean it'll work again. Just the opposite is more likely. Don't worry, though. Another unexpected development puts everything right again. Be patient, and wear your seatbelt.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Back and forth, up and down, in and out. Which way should you turn next? Knowing you, it'll probably be all of the above. You're usually willing to try just about anything to see what happens. Today, that could be very interesting. A person you thought you knew very well could surprise you, too.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You could get tangled up today in red tape. The machinery's working fine; it's the people who are the problem. Somebody else's inability to make a decision could throw you off your schedule. You hate to just step in and take over, but you may have to do just that. Don't let somebody else's Ditz Day ruin yours.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You ought to be one place, and you want to be another. A new technology could help you be both places almost simultaneously. You may already know what it is, but not know to use it. If there's something that fits that description, put in a little extra study time. A friend would love to help.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) An excellent career opportunity could open up today, almost by accident. If you've been thinking about the job you'd like to have, you'll know it when you see it. You should be doing work you love, and getting paid what you're worth. If you're not, check out the want ads.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) You've been learning all week, and now you could get a chance to teach. The flow of ideas is stimulating, and also creative. One idea leads to another, almost more quickly than you can keep up. Don't be doing all this studying for the fun of it. Make it pay.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Money is an issue again today. Looks like it's coming into your account, which is wonderful. Of course, you'd like to spend it on gifts, but hold back a little. The best gift of all is the one you'll give to yourself when you're old and gray: a big, fat retirement account.

Birthstone of March: Aquamarine — Jasper

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR FRIDAY, MARCH 5, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You're in a feisty mood and with good reason. Your authority is being challenged. Losing your temper is not a good idea. It could cost you plenty, too. Instead, listen and learn. Let others know you understand the point they're trying to get across. Then, include it in your agenda.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) If you don't feel acknowledged for what you've done, you could get into a bad mood today, and that bad mood could go over into other areas of your life. Watch out for that today. The problem would be work-related, and the argument would be with your spouse. If you catch yourself doing it, just apologise.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Think about the possible consequences before you take action today. Although things seem easy on the surface, there's something to consider beneath the surface. Somebody who's urging you to act quickly may have an ulterior motive. If you can find out what that is, you'll be money ahead.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) You would have to clone yourself today to comply with all the requests being made of you. Since that's unlikely to happen, you may have to practice another skill instead. Just say no. There may be whimpering and maybe even a temper tantrum, but don't buckle under! Stand up for yourself!

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) The good news is that you could finally make contact today with a distant friend. Your love will be as strong as the last time you saw each other, and that may have been quite a while ago. The bad news is that you can't meet quite yet. You can make plans, though, and you should.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Your brilliant insight could solve the problem. That's the good news. The bad news is that this whole deal might cost you more than you had budgeted. You hate it when that happens. Give yourself time. You're learning as you go along, and sometimes that's expensive. Deduct it under "education."

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Your love life is

doing well, but you may wonder where you'll get the money. They say it's more important to have love, but you'd rather have both than choose between them. Well, they also say if you do what you love, the money will follow. Try that.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You're getting more powerful as you gain information. You're in a position to find out what's going on behind the scenes, so do that first. Don't be impatient to act. Your first impulse may not be your wisest move. Let the other guy try it first, to see what happens.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You're getting smarter, and more skillful at your specialty. That's because you've been practicing. You can have another breakthrough today, if you keep at it. You may be starting to feel pressure, but don't be dismayed. If you keep doing the homework, you'll do fine on the test.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Get a special gift for a loved one today. It'll make up for the fact that you can't spend much time together. Your schedule is completely overbooked already. That's rotten situation to be in, but make the best of it. Maybe you can reschedule one of your appointments for the weekend.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) You could get a great opportunity to advance today, but it might mean giving up something in order to get something better. When it comes down to happening or not, it's kind of hard to let go of the familiar and try something new. You don't have to decide right now. Think about it over the weekend.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You're doing well today, but don't get cocky. You could learn something the hard way if you're not careful. An older person is trying to tell you what to do, in a rather obnoxious way. Instead of resisting, you ought to listen carefully, especially if money is involved.

Birthstone of March: Aquamarine — Jasper

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Records under threat at World Indoor Athletics Championships

MAEBASHI, Japan (AFP) — Records will be under threat at the World Indoor Athletics Championships which start here Friday with Maurice Greene, Haile Gebrselassie, Maria Mutola and Gabriela Szabo leading the charge.

All have broken or nudged world marks in the past month and vowed to do better in the green dome Maebashi.

And with veteran sprinter Frankie Fredericks and new women's pole vault world record holder Nicole Rieger-Humbert also on hot form, there is a promise of three days of thrills at the first indoor world championships to be held in Asia.

Greene tickled his 60-metre sprint record of 6.39sec in the semi-finals of the U.S. Indoor Championships last weekend, winning in 6.40sec, but was incredibly beaten by Tim Harden in the final.

He will be up against training partner Ato Bolden of Trinidad in the blue ribbon contest and, thriving on the competition, predicts the world record will be lowered.

"Every day I learn something new. Training with Bolden and Tim Drummond is always intensive. But that helps my motivation. We

always push each other," Greene insisted ahead of his arrival in Japan.

Making a rare appearance at the indoor championships will be Fredericks, who at the age of 31 can now see time running out in his quest to get top honours to add to his solitary gold from Olympic Games and outdoor World Championships.

The Namibian is in brilliant form having run 19.92sec over 200m outdoors in Melbourne on February 25 and a stunning 100m of 9.94sec in Sydney. "Maybe this is my year," commented Fredericks, who is already acclaimed as one of the greatest sprinters of all time, despite his nearly-man tag.

If he takes on the 200m, where he is the record holder with a time of 19.92sec, Fredericks will have to take on reigning title holder Kevin Little from the powerful US team.

Ethiopia's Gebrselassie set the new men's 5,000m world record of 12min 50.38sec in Birmingham, England in February.

His aim now is the 3,000m mark of 7:24.90 set by Kenyan arch-rival Daniel Kimen last year in Budapest. Olympic champion Gail Devers

will be the woman to watch in the sprints, mainly because American rival Marion Jones is avoiding the indoor season as she prepares for the main World Championships in Seville later this year.

But Devers will face the continual challenge of Jamaican Merlene Ottey, at the age of 38 still battling for her first title though she holds the 200m record of 21.87sec.

In the 60m hurdles will be Olga Shishigina of Kazakhstan, who won the silver medal in Paris two years ago — after coming back from a two year ban for a drug failure.

Shishigina will lead the Asian challenge at the championships, where Mozambique's Mutola will be going for a fourth straight 800m indoor world title. And her confidence is sky high after her 1,000m world record of 2:30.94 set in Stockholm last month — beating her own two year old mark.

Mutola, who only needs an Olympic medal to complete her collection of top honours, wants the title and the 11-year-old world record of 1:56.40 set by East German Christine Wachtel.

The African runner beat Wachtel's time by four hundredths of a second last year but was disqualified for stepping on the infield on the final bend.

"If I can get over the jetlag then I know the time is within reach," said Mutola.

At the same Stockholm meeting, Germany's Rieger Humbert added her name to the short list of women's pole vault record holders with a leap of 4.56m.

That was one centimetre more than the incredible Australian vaulter Emma George who has been resting a sore shoulder for several weeks so she can compete in Maebashi.

Romania's new running star Szabo took 15 seconds off the old 5,000m mark in Dortmund, Germany last month and days later came within 0.27sec of Dutchwoman Ely Van Hulst's 10-year-old record of 8:33.82 in the 3,000m at a meeting in Lievin in France.

"I feel just right to take on the 3,000m world record at the championships," the 25-year-old Romanian said in training here. "I want to beat the Olympic contenders," she added.



Atletico Madrid defender Toni Munoz (R) challenges AS Roma's Brazilian Paulo Sergio for the ball during their UEFA Cup quarter-final first leg soccer match at Vicente Calderon stadium (AFP photo)

Sydney plans to sell guide on how to organise a major event

SYDNEY (AFP) — Sydney Olympic officials have come up with a novel way of raising much-needed cash — selling information about how they organised the 2000 games.

The Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG) is putting together a blueprint of "intellectual property" to sell to other countries, chief executive Sandy Hollway said Wednesday.

The idea was to sell information to cities planning major bids and events such as Olympic and Commonwealth Games. No price had yet been set because at this stage the concept was only being floated, he told reporters.

When SOCOG began it had virtually no guide on how to run a major sporting event, despite input from the International Olympic Committee and the organising committees of Atlanta and Barcelona.

"But we have developed systematic, documented information that we wish to make available," Hollway said.

"If I was a private consultant I would be charging a fortune for this. I do not wish to charge cities a fortune but I'm a very poor man and would like some recompense for this intellectual property."

He said if a city purchased the SOCOG blueprint, the information would be followed up with seminars and contacts with representatives from related government agencies.

Sydney Lord Mayor Frank Sartor said a substantial amount of work had been put in to preparing the blueprint for major events, work which would potentially save future organisers about 12 months of effort.

Australian athletes to be given banned drug in trial

SYDNEY (AFP) — Australian athletes will be deliberately injected with a banned performance-enhancing drug to help develop a reliable doping test before the Sydney 2000 Olympics, an official said Wednesday.

Ross Smith, director of sports science at the Australian Institute of Sport, said 22 athletes aged 18 to 35 had volunteered to be given a course of the drug erythropoietin (Epo) during the next five weeks.

Eleven others will be given a placebo. Epo occurs naturally in humans but some endurance athletes inject it to enhance their performance as it increases the ability of the bloodstream to carry oxygen.

It is not detectable through urine analysis and there is currently no reliable test. But the AIS said it was confident it could now develop a screening process.

"Their (epo users) blood profile will change, their red blood cells will change in terms of number, age, colour and we'll be able to identify that through the equipment we have," Smith told reporters.

"We guess that the equipment we have now can identify minute changes in blood profile."

He said it had been difficult to find volunteers for the study because the athletes have to stand out of competition for 14 weeks to allow the drug to leave the body after the five-week programme.

There were also potential health concerns, but the athletes involved would be carefully monitored and the programme had been passed by the AIS ethics committee.

"There are concerns about using Epo if you use too much, but it will be given in small doses under management of physiologists and doctors and the volunteers were all screened for likely adverse effects," he said.

Smith said it was likely AIS scientists will have developed a test for epo by the end of April and he was confident it would be approved in time for the Sydney Games.

"This is just the progress of science trying to catch up with what's happening in the field," he said.

UEFA Cup balance of power evenly spread

PARIS (AFP) — The balance of power among Italian, Spanish and French clubs in the UEFA Cup quarter-finals hung in the balance on Tuesday with only Italy's Bologna overwhelming winners.

Bologna beat French side Lyon 3-0 but there was all to play for in the second leg of the three other matches which had 2-1 scorelines.

Roma fell at Atletico Madrid, Marseille beat Celta Vigo at the Stade Velodrome and Bordeaux won at home against Parma.

It was two goals from back-to-form Florian Maurice which earned Marseille their victory over Celta Vigo as the Riviera Club kept on course to repeat its European glory days.

Maurice, who had not scored since December 19, found the net in the 33rd and 67th minutes with Russian Alexander Mostovoi equalising in the 64th minute.

Marseille, who won the 1993 European Cup, saw their early domination pay dividends in the 33rd minute when Christophe Dugary dispossessed Yugoslavia's Goran Djorovic on the edge of Vigo's box and passed to Maurice, who fired home.

Former Strasbourg midfielder Mostovoi brought the scores level on 64 minutes after sucking the ball home after Stephane Porato had been scrambling for the ball at full stretch.

The goal was virtually inevitable as Marseille have only kept one clean sheet in 1999 — their 1-0 win over Strasbourg on Thursday.

Great work from Robert Pires allowed Maurice to put Marseille back in front three minutes later.

He feigned a cross from the right, completely fooling the defender, which left him plenty of time to pick out unmarked Maurice who easily fired past Richard Dutruel.

However, Marseille coach

Roland Courbis, who tipped Vigo as favourites before the start of the tie, knows they have their work to do to make the semi-finals in the second leg in Spain.

Success in the return match would not go amiss to Marseille fans, who have seen their club knocked out of both domestic cups by lens though they do lead the French League.

Vigo, fourth in the league in Spain and with a formidable midfield unit of Russia's Valery Karpin, compatriot Mostovoi and Brazil's 1994 World Cup winner Mazinho, have already proved their pedigree to beat two former European Cup winners in England's Liverpool and Aston Villa in previous rounds.

Atletico Madrid dominated AS Roma but had to settle for a 2-1 victory over the Italians in a gritty match.

Romero Jose Mari opened the scoring in the 13th minute and Roberto made it 2-0 just minutes after the restart against a Roma side who failed to create a single clear scoring opportunity.

International midfielder Luigi Di Biagio conjured their goal out of nothing in the 75th minute, blasting a 30-metre free-kick into the roof of Atletico's net to give Roma a chance in the second leg.

Their coach Zdenek Zeman said: "I just hope we can have a good game in Rome. The important thing will be to score a goal and not concede one."

Audetic dominated the first half and most of the second, but were relieved to see the referee reject appeals from Roma's Brazilian striker Paulo Sergio for a penalty within minutes of the start.

Giuseppe Signori all but booked Bologna's place in the last four after engineering a convincing victory over Lyon.

Signori scored a goal in each half and then set up the third for Jonathan Binotto

as the Italian side out-gunned their French opponents.

Lyon were a match for their hosts in midfield, but failed to make much headway in the Bologna penalty area and had nobody capable of finishing their best chances.

"Signori, whose team started their UEFA campaign in the Intertoto Cup last summer, said: "We've got the right spirit. We set ourselves this objective at the start of the season and we want to see it right through to the end."

But having seen Lyon's recent win at the Parc des Princes, he admitted: "We've seen a different Lyon to the one who played against Paris St. Germain."

A late goal by Parma's Argentinian striker Hernan Crespo gave his side hope for a semi-final spot following their defeat at Bordeaux.

Johan Micoud and then Sylvain Wiltord put Bordeaux 2-0 up just before the break and everything looked to be going horribly wrong for Parma when skipper Antonio Benarrivo was sent off for his second yellow card with eight minutes to play.

But substitute Crespo, who has scored 15 goals to put him second in Italy's scoring list, did once more what he does best to earn a valuable away goal with seconds of the match remaining.

Bordeaux, who reached the UEFA Cup final in 1996 after qualifying through the pre-season Intertoto Cup, will be rueing their late lapse to let in Crespo.

Bordeaux coach Elie Baup said afterwards: "I still believe we can make it to the semifinals as we have never lost away in the UEFA Cup all season. I don't think we lost our way after Parma had a man sent off. Parma's goal was deserved and no one was to blame."

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Schult heads Australian GP discuss competition

BRISBANE (AFP) — Germany's world discus record holder Jurgen Schult will head a group of top international throwers at the Australian Grand Prix athletics final here on March 13, organisers said Wednesday. Schult, whose world record mark of 74.08 metres has stood since 1988, was Wednesday named as a starter for the meet along with compatriots Michael Mollenbeck and Michael Lischka. Schult's long career has been highlighted by gold medals at the 1988 Olympic Games and 1987 world championships. The men's javelin will include Olympic finalist Peter Blank and fellow German Raymond Hecht, whose best throw of 92.98m is the second longest in history. The women's discus event will feature reigning Olympic champion Ika Wyludda while world No.1 ranked Tanja Darnaske and Australian Olympic silver medalist Louise Curry (Nee McPaul) will start as favourites in the javelin.

Germany calls for 2-year suspension for drug offences

BONN (AFP) — German minister for the interior Otto Schily on Tuesday called for a minimum suspension of two years for anyone found guilty of taking performance enhancing drugs in sport. The German minister made his comments following a meeting with British sports minister Chris Smith. Europe's 15 sports ministers last month called for the establishment of an international anti-doping agency to deal with the growing problem of drug taking in sport. The "Lausanne Declaration" made during February's world conference on doping in sport fixed a two-year suspension, but was greeted with widespread criticism because it left the door open for exceptions. Europe's sports ministers will formulate their anti-drug policy during a meeting scheduled to take place in Paderborn, Germany from May 31 to June 2. "Only harsh threats will act as a deterrent," added Schily, whose country presently holds the EU presidency.

Hagelauer to help British tennis

PARIS (AFP) — Patrice Hagelauer will leave his post as French national coach at the end of March and work with Britain's top players, French federation national technical director Jean-Claude Massias said on Tuesday. The 50-year-old, ranked No. 12 in France during his playing career, helped the careers of players such as Henri Leconte, Guy Forget and Yannick Noah, whom he coached to the French Open title in 1983. Hagelauer, who also contributed to France's Davis Cup victories in 1991 and 1996, will be working for the lawn tennis association as a performance director in both the men's and women's game.

Ronaldo's got psychological problem — Pele

TURIN (AFP) — Soccer legend Pele claimed on Wednesday that Ronaldo's problems are more psychological than physical, and blamed them on Brazil's World Cup coach Mario Zagallo.

Ronaldo, who has been suffering from chronic tendinitis since France 98, hasn't played for his Serie A club Inter Milan since mid-January.

But Pele claims the problem is in the Brazilian's head rather than his knees. And he believes that Zagallo is responsible, for fielding him in last July's World Cup final just hours after suffering a fit.

"His problem is more psychological than physical," Pele wrote in a front-page editorial for Turin sports paperuttosport.

Zagallo committed a serious error by making him play all 90 minutes of the World Cup final after what happened to him a few hours before. The stress that he underwent was enormous.

"I pray for him," he wrote. Pele also used his editorial to support the growth of big business in football, citing the example of the English Premiership, and to welcome the conduct of Sepp Blatter as FIFA president.

"Football will become ever more professional in 2000, and ever less managed in an improvised way," he said. "We've had enough of financial holes and 'slush funds'."

"I don't agree with people who see a worrying future and who talk only about football-business. Pay-per-view and cable TV are important for future development... and England and Italy are showing us the way."

TV and sponsorship are the key, Pele argued, "and with Blatter in charge, football will make even more progress."

"His management of FIFA is more democratic than his predecessor," he added, referring to the often criticised style of ex-chief Joao Havelange.

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LOCAL SPORTS SCENE



Swimmers leave for Casablanca

AMMAN — The national swimming team leaves for Morocco Thursday to compete in the Casablanca Tournament as part of preparations for the 9th Pan-Arab Games, to be held here Aug. 15-31. The delegation is headed by Jacqueline Khouri of the Jordan Swimming Federation (JSF) and includes swimmers Zeid Oteibi, Yazan Khouri, Ala' Wazani, Sa'd Nasser, Omar Abu Firas, Musa Kuskib, Rania Ghousheh, Andreh Khouri, Mira Ghneim, Hiba Nasser, Sandri Zreiq, Farah Younes and Razan Khouri. Meanwhile, the JSF's Talat Nasser also leaves for Morocco today to hold talks with officials of Arab federations to secure wide-ranging participation in the First Arab Championship for Short-Course Swimming, which will be held next month in Egypt.

GP number 100 for Damon Hill

MELBOURNE (AFP) — Former world champion Damon Hill will line up for his 100th grand prix in the season-opening Australian Formula One race at the Albert Park circuit here on Sunday.

Hill, 38, last year thrilled Jordan with the English team's long-awaited breakthrough victory when he snatched the spa GP in Belgium from the McLaren and Ferrari giants. It was a one-two finish for Jordan with Ralf Schumacher, who moves to Williams this year in a swap with German Heinz Harald Frentzen, taking second.

Hill won back-to-back Australian Grands Prix when he took the last race in Adelaide for Williams in 1995 and the first in Melbourne in 1996, his World Championship winning year.

From being a struggling team Jordan has improved to now challenge Williams and Benetton behind McLaren and Ferrari in the World Championship series, in what team owner Eddie Jordan says will be "an enthralling encounter" this year.

"If winter testing is anything to go by, there are four to five teams who will be battling it out behind McLaren and Ferrari," Jordan said Wednesday.

"Jordan did not make a very impressive start in our first week of testing in Barcelona, but after subsequent work in the drawing office our times improved and we feel we made an important breakthrough.

"Both drivers seem very happy with the car and have been on excellent form, both on and off the track."

Hill said that after winning Spa last year Jordan was now aiming for top-three finishes this season.

"Our objective this year is to be on the podium and to be in with a shout of winning a couple of races," Hill said. Hill said his 100th race was a landmark but it didn't diminish his enthusiasm for the sport.

"I may have been in Formula One a while but I still get very excited by the start of the season," he said.

"I have a competitive edge which I cannot shake off and driving a Formula One car still gives me a huge thrill," he said.



Andre Agassi

Agassi struggles, recovers to beat Meligeni

SCOTTSDALE (AFP) — Three-time champion Andre Agassi salvaged a first round match, beating determined Brazilian Fernando Meligeni 3-6, 7-5, 6-3 Tuesday night to open his title defence at the \$350,000 Franklin Templeton Classic.

The popular American third seed looked anything but sharp in his first outing since being thrown out of the second round of an event in San Jose for swearing at an umpire in February.

Top seed Pete Sampras, also shy of match play in 1999 after skipping the Australian Open to rest, was playing the last contest of the first round against another south American, Ramon Delgado of Paraguay.

Agassi began promisingly with an opening-game break of Meligeni, ranked 61st on the ATP tour list. But the American lost his momentum in the fourth game as he was broken back the persistent south American.

Meligeni took control of the set with another break for 4-2 and held for 5-2 as Agassi mis-hit. The American held in the eighth game, but that didn't prevent Meligeni from winning the opener from another of Agassi's unforced errors after 24 minutes.

Despite hopes of a sellout crowd, Agassi's luck refused to change and the defending champion dropped serve to start the second set.

Agassi got his own back for 2-all and broke a final time in the 12th game to turn level the match at a set apiece.

The American moved out to a 3-1 margin in the final set as the frustrated Meligeni double-faulted for a break point and then returned long. Agassi held for 4-1 and served out the win to advance into a match-up against Mariano Zabaleta of Argentina on Wednesday.

Agassi, 29, came to Scottsdale after two straight poor showings, his San Jose debacle and a fourth-round defeat at the Australian Open against fellow American Vince Spadea in which Agassi produced more than 70 unforced errors.

Agassi now stands 17-3 in Scottsdale after winning in 1993, 1994 and last year.

Following heated exchange between JFA and Al Faisali Prince Ali calls on all parties to end differences

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — His Royal Highness Prince Ali, who assumed his new post as Jordan Football Association (JFA) president, will have a new challenge ahead namely to cool off the war of words between the JFA and one of the Kingdom's major soccer clubs — Al Faisali.

Prince Ali, who was appointed as the JFA's chief last week replacing His Majesty King Abdullah, has launched an attempt to resolve the crisis between the two sides.

It was reported that a meeting between Prince Ali and his deputy Saleh Irsheidat was held in the latter's residence late Tuesday to find a solution to the problem.

The logjam started when Al Faisali's chairman, Sultan Udwan published a controversial and strongly-worded statement in the local dailies followed by an answer by the JFA's secretary general Mohammad Hamdan.

Udwan criticised the JFA's current leadership and demanded the reformation of the association. He also called the JFA to change the current plan that governs the distribution of JFA's revenues among the Premier League clubs.

Udwan also demanded that three members of the current leadership,

Prince Ali urges support for national team players

HRH PRINCE Ali Wednesday underlined the importance of providing all necessary means of support to Jordanian athletes as the Kingdom prepares to host the 9th Pan-Arab Games — Al Hussein Games — this summer.

At a meeting with the local press and representatives of the sports media at the Royal Court, Prince Ali, who now heads the Jordan Football Association, said he would continue His Majesty King Abdullah's policies which had secured a qualitative leap in Jordanian soccer.

His Highness stressed the need to emphasise sports in schools and to adopt a team spirit between, schools, clubs and officials to upgrade sports in the country.

Prince Ali also underlined the importance of providing all necessary means to assure Jordanian clubs and national teams fare well in international events.

namely Irsheidat, Hamdan and the head of the technical committee Bassam Haroun, be replaced immediately.

He also accused the JFA's leadership of committing a mistake by signing a \$120,000 worth contract with the Yugoslav-born trainer, Anatoly Fokashen, to train the national team, which witnessed a decline in its performance following this deal, Udwan said.

Hamdan responded by charging Udwan of ordering Al Faisali's national team players to refrain from joining

its regular practices.

Irsheidat said that during the meeting, Prince Ali urged concerned parties to refrain from the war of words to serve the interests of Jordanian soccer, which will have another challenge next August, namely to retain the gold medal won at the 8th Pan-Arab Games in Beirut in 1997.

Jordan will be hosting the upcoming 9th Pan-Arab Games August 15-31 with the participation of more than 15 Arab countries.

Blazers top Jazz in double overtime

PORTLAND (R) — The Portland Trail Blazers, overlooked as title contenders by preseason handicappers, made a statement on Tuesday.

Rasheed Wallace scored 22 points off the bench, including two foul shots with 17 seconds left in double overtime, as the Trail Blazers beat the defending Western Conference champion Utah Jazz 102-100.

Wallace's foul shots in the second overtime period put the Blazers in front 101-100.

Tough Portland defence forced Utah's Greg Foster into a turnover with three seconds left and Damon Stoudamire made 1-of-2 free throws to make it a two-point game.

The Jazz got the ball back with a chance to force a third overtime, but Bryon Russell stumbled and never got off a shot.

Portland improved to 10-3, closing within a half-game of Utah for the NBA's best record.

Isaiah Rider's layup for a 90-90 tie with 46 seconds left in regulation forced overtime. The Jazz jumped ahead 94-90 in the first overtime on Jeff Hornacek's jumper. But the Blazers forced a second extra session on a Stoudamire jumper.

In Miami, Terry Porter netted the Heat's final four points, including a pair of free throws with 54 seconds left, as Miami edged their arch rival New York Knicks 85-84 in overtime for their



Houston Rockets Hakeem Olajuwon (bottom) cuts off the path to the basket for San Antonio Spurs Avery Johnson during first quarter action (AFP photo)

ninth win in 10 games.

Miami's Alonzo Mourning had 28 points, 11 rebounds and seven blocks, including a key block on Patrick Ewing's layup attempt with 37 seconds to play to preserve a one-point lead.

In Vancouver, Chris Webber had 36 points and 17 rebounds for his 14th double-double in 15 games to lead the Sacramento Kings to a 111-101 victory over the

Grizzlies.

In Dallas, the Los Angeles Clippers continued their march toward the worst start in NBA history, falling 112-99 to the Mavericks.

At Indiana, Reggie Miller scored 21 points and sparked a key 11-0 fourth-quarter run and the Pacers held Denver to 11 points in the final period to rally for a 88-81 victory over the Nuggets.

In Houston, Tim Duncan

scored 15 of his 23 points in the second half and grabbed 14 rebounds and Avery Johnson collected 18 points and dished out 13 assists to lead the San Antonio Spurs to a 99-82 victory over the Rockets.

In Atlanta, Mitch Richmond scored 28 points and Juwon Howard added 20 as a hot-shooting Washington Wizards halted a four-game slide with a 97-77 rout of the undermanned Hawks.

At New Jersey, Ray Allen had 19 points and 10 rebounds and Glenn Robinson added 18 points, including six free throws in the final minute, as the Milwaukee Bucks beat the Nets 94-86.

In Cleveland, Shawn Kemp scored 22 points and Bob Sura added 19 as the Cavaliers ended a four-game losing streak with a 116-99 pounding of the Boston Celtics.

In Chicago, Grant Hill scored 17 points, Joe Dumars added 16 and Jerry Stackhouse 15 as the Detroit Pistons crushed the Bulls 108-78, handing the dismantled defending champions their worst ever loss at the United Center.

At Minnesota, Kevin Garnett had 27 points, 14 rebounds and six assists and the Timberwolves took advantage of another fourth-quarter collapse by the Golden State Warriors to post an 89-78 victory.

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ANSWERS TO WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ

Q. 1 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:
AQ7S CJ102 QJ5 AKQ1093
The bidding has proceeded:
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
1C Pass 1C
What do you bid now?
A - If you play that a two-over-one response is a game force, you have no option but to respond one no trump. If not, it is a close decision whether to bid two clubs or one no trump. With only one prime card, a doubleton in partner's suit and a balanced hand, we prefer the slight underbid of one no trump.

Q. 2 - East-West, vulnerable, as South you hold:
47 CQ762 CA10764 AKQ3
The bidding has proceeded:
SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
1C Pass 1C
What do you bid now?
A - Another close decision on a tough hand to bid. The choice lies between one no trump, a waiting bid of two clubs and two diamonds. The experts' choice is probably two clubs. For simpler souls, we are not thrilled with inventing a rebid on a three-card suit, but to rebid two diamonds with a minimum and a shabby five-card suit is even worse. So we will take our medicine and rebid one no trump despite the singleton in partner's suit.

Q. 3 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:
AS CQ1084 CQ762 AKQJ54
Partner opens the bidding with one no trump. What do you respond?
A - This hand is easier to bid if you don't play transfer bids, since you can bid two diamonds to show a weak hand with a five-card or

longer suit. Transfer bidders must play at the three-level or pass one no trump. Don't even think of checking on a major fit. Partner will almost surely bid spades, and what then? Pass.

Q. 4 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:
AS8S CQ8742 CAK5 AQ8
Partner opens the bidding with one no trump. What do you respond?
A - Here transfer bids work beautifully... you can transfer to hearts by bidding two diamonds and then jump to three no trump, showing a balanced hand with five hearts. If that weapon is not in your arsenal, simply jump to three no trump. Your hearts are too weak for a jump to three hearts, which partner will automatically raise to game on almost any three-card holding.

Q. 5 - As South vulnerable, you hold:
AJ5 C7 CQ9 AKQJ7652
Partner opens the bidding with one heart. What do you respond?
A - While you do not have much in the way of high cards, this hand is so strong in trick-taking potential that we don't feel you can ever catch up if you simply respond two clubs. Our choice is a jump shift to three clubs.

Q. 6 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:
AS8S CQ5 CQ762 AKJ54
Partner opens the bidding with one club. What do you respond?
A - Your first reaction might be to bid one diamond, but your hand is worth only one bid and you won't be happy if partner rebids in a major or, worse, one no trump. Respond two clubs immediately and spare yourself worry of what twists the auction could take.

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Arafat to ask Clinton to recognise Palestinian right to statehood

RAMALLAH (AFP) — President Yasser Arafat will ask U.S. President Bill Clinton when they meet this month to formally recognise the Palestinians' right to statehood, a senior aide said Wednesday.

Such U.S. recognition could be part of a broader international deal under which the Palestinians would agree to postpone a unilateral declaration of independence beyond May 4, when interim peace accords with Israel expire, said Tayeb Abdul Rahim, one of Arafat's closest advisors.

"Arafat will ask Clinton at his summit on March 23 for American recognition of the Palestinians' right to self-

determination, which will clearly mean the establishment of a Palestinian state," Abdul Rahim told AFP. Palestinian officials said the Arafat-Clinton meeting at the White House would focus on Palestinian conditions for delaying the independence declaration, which Israel has warned would lead to a major crisis and potential violence.

Europe, the U.S., Jordan and Egypt have all urged Arafat to delay the statehood declaration, arguing in part that the move would likely boost the position of Israeli hardliners in national elections to be held on May 17.

Abdul Rahim stressed that no final decision had been taken by Palestinian leaders

on the issue.

And he said that even if the declaration is put off, the world community must recognise that the status of the Palestinian territories will have changed with the expiration of the five-year interim autonomy period set down in the Oslo peace accords.

"We want to continue consulting with our friends before we will declare our position" on the timing of a statehood declaration, he said.

"But whatever the decision is, the political status of the Palestinian territories after the 4th of May will never be the same," he said.

Palestinians assert that the change of status is legally

necessary since once the Oslo interim accords expire, all institutions of the PNA autonomy government created under those agreements will technically lose their legitimacy.

Another senior Palestinian official said European governments had already agreed to boost their ties to the PNA after May 4 in exchange for a postponement of the independence declaration.

"The Europeans are going to raise the level of Palestinian representative offices as part of a clearer recognition of the Palestinians' right to self-determination," said Nabil Shaath, the Palestinian minister for international cooperation.

Kurdish rebels move to replace Ocalan as leader — report

ANKARA (R) — Turkey's Kurdish rebels have taken steps towards choosing a new leader to replace jailed chief Abdullah Ocalan, a Turkish newspaper said on Wednesday.

Milliyet said a meeting of the Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) had appointed a senior commander, Cemil Bayik, as the guerrillas' "high authority."

Ocalan, who founded the Kurdish rebel movement and led its armed campaign for 14 years, was seized in Kenya last month and

flown to Turkey for trial on treason charges.

If convicted, he faces either execution or the rest of his life in jail. Kurdish sources said any new title for Bayik did not mean he was a direct replacement for Ocalan but was recognition that he now had a greater role in the rebels' fight for Kurdish self-rule in southeastern Turkey.

Bayik, in his late forties, was a fellow founder of the PKK in 1978 and is alleged to have planned an attack on the army in 1984

regarded as marking the start of the armed campaign.

He is believed to have been fighting in the mountains of Turkey and Kurdish northern Iraq since then, unlike Ocalan who lived in a series of villas in Damascus for 18 years until late 1998 when Syria threw him out under pressure from Turkey.

Milliyet said Bayik's promotion had dealt a blow to the leadership hopes of Ocalan's brother Osman. Another senior PKK

commander on trial for treason blamed Abdullah Ocalan, known as "Apo," for a 1993 attack on a bus in which 33 unarmed soldiers were killed. The assault broke a unilaterally declared PKK ceasefire.

"There was never a full ceasefire because the army continued operations. Apo told us to take revenge. You can see what effect this remark had by looking at the military losses," Semdin Sakik told a court in the southeastern regional capital Diyarbakir.



RACING DUCKS: A Thames Water worker Wednesday prepares over 100 plastic ducks on Westminster Bridge in London as part of a charity race on the River Thames for Members of Parliament. The race, by Thames Water, highlights the environment and the Thames Water investment programme (AFP photo)

Turkey warns Greece over PKK support

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkey has warned neighbouring Greece of a further worsening of ties if Athens continues to support the rebel Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) fighting the Ankara government, the liberal daily Milliyet reported Wednesday.

"We have to see that Greece cuts off its ties with the PKK," Turkish Foreign Ministry Undersecretary Korkmaz Haknir told the daily. "Otherwise, worse things will happen between the two countries."

Turkey's already sour ties with Greece took a new downwards turn when Athens admitted that it had sheltered PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan in its ambassador's residence in Kenya for 12 days before the rebel leader was snatched and hauled back to Turkey last month.

"Greece follows a hostile policy towards Turkey. If it does not change its attitude, worse developments will take place in eastern Mediterranean. We are coming to the end of our patience," Haknir said.

In Athens, Greek government spokesman Dimitris Reppas accused Turkish officials of stirring up trouble between the two countries through their "aggressive and provocative" remarks.

He urged Turkey to "drop its anti-Greek attitude and look at issues more calmly."

Turkey and Greece remain at odds over a series of problems in the Aegean as well as over the Mediterranean island of Cyprus, which remains divided between the two.

Last week, the Turkish foreign ministry announced that the Greek and Cypriot attitude in the Ocalan case would not facilitate a settlement in Cyprus.

U.S. envoy Thomas Miller is scheduled to travel shortly to Cyprus, Turkey and Greece to try to ease tensions, a U.S. source in Ankara said.

"We have a communications problem with Greece. Our dialogue channels are more open even with Syria. We have not had dialogue with Greece for 20 years," Haknir told Milliyet.

In October last year, Syria pledged to close down all PKK camps on its soil and turn out Ocalan from his long-term base in the country after Turkey threatened military action against its southern neighbour.

"How can a NATO-member country work against another NATO-member country? Greece has violated all rules of law," Haknir added.

A week ago, Turkish President Suleyman Demirel charged that Athens was an "accomplice" of the PKK and warned that Ankara would use its "right to self-defence" if Greece continues to support the rebels.

NEWS IN BRIEF

One Turkish soldier killed in PKK attack

ANKARA (AFP) — A Turkish soldier was killed and five others were wounded in a rebel attack on an army patrol in Turkey's troubled southeast late Tuesday, the Anatolia news agency reported Wednesday. The patrol was ambushed on the highway linking the regional capital Diyarbakir with Mardin near the Syrian border. Anatolia said the attack was committed by "terrorists," the official Turkish term for fighters of the rebel Kurdish Labour Party (PKK).

British 'grannies' told to tackle crime

LONDON (AFP) — British Home Secretary Jack Straw on Wednesday called on the nation's grandmothers to join the fight against crime, saying they were the right people to collar young hooligans. "Some of the most effective people at tackling these youngsters are grandmothers because they know how to deal with these lads. On the whole, you don't hit your mother, you don't hit women. It's quite interesting, the psychology of this," he said in an interview released on the BBC Internet site. Straw, who has cultivated an image as a "crime-buster," recently came in for a storm of criticism after telling Britons to intervene when they witness a crime in the street. He even tried to show the way by telling how he had ticked off an adolescent he had caught spitting on passers-by from a bridge above. The minister was accused of inciting people to take unnecessary risks.

Nineteen drown in Egypt bus crash

CAIRO (R) — Nineteen people drowned and 28 were slightly injured when a bus plunged into a canal after colliding with a tractor in southern Egypt Wednesday, security sources said. They said the accident happened while the bus was travelling south from Assiut, 400 km south of Cairo. The source said the bus driver, who was among the injured, had lost control of the vehicle after trying in vain to avoid the tractor. Earlier reports had identified the other vehicle involved as a truck.

U.S., Kuwaiti forces to hold exercise

KUWAIT (AP) — U.S. navy sailors and marines from the Fifth Fleet will start a one-month training exercise with Kuwaiti forces on Thursday. A U.S. embassy statement said Wednesday that the war games, code-named Eager Mace 99, will include amphibious, ground, air and naval training. The embassy did not say how many soldiers would take part in the manoeuvres. Eager Mace is the latest of routine exercises between the two militaries, part of a 10-year defence agreement Kuwait signed with Washington shortly after the 1991 Gulf War that liberated this small oil-rich state from a seven-month Iraqi occupation.

Iran to try police on torture charges

TEHRAN (R) — An Iranian police chief and 10 of his men are to stand trial on charges of torturing Tehran city officials arrested last year on corruption charges. Iran's news agency IRNA reported on Wednesday. Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Naqdi, chief of police intelligence, and 10 members of his staff will be tried at a military court in May. IRNA quoted judiciary spokesman Fotovat Nassiri-Savakdahi as saying. The court will hear charges of mistreatment filed against the suspects by a number of officials who were detained in connection with a corruption scandal in the Tehran city government, Nassiri-Savakdahi said.

Egyptian gives birth to quintuplets

CAIRO (AFP) — A 27-year-old Egyptian woman who took fertility drugs gave birth to quintuplets on her first delivery, hospital officials said Wednesday. The three boys and two girls were placed in an incubator with difficulty breathing but are otherwise healthy, a spokesman for Maadi Military Hospital in southern Cairo said. The babies were delivered by caesarean section on Monday, two months before their due date, and weighed between 800 g and 1.2 kg, hospital officials said.

Iraq urges Security Council to halt U.S. bombings Russia, France to raise pipeline issue at U.N.

Agencies

IRAQ URGED the U.N. Security Council on Wednesday to stop the U.S. air raids which have sliced the sanctions-hit state's oil exports in half, as Moscow and Paris condemned the deadly bombings.

"We call on the Security Council to intervene to stop the continuation of these aggressions and to condemn them," the official Al Jumhuriya newspaper said, accusing the U.S. of plotting to stop Iraqi oil exports.

"At the same time, we stress that Iraq is determined to continue to oppose the U.S. and British planes," the newspaper said.

The defiance came as President Saddam Hussein late on Tuesday presided over a meeting of top officials to review Iraq's air defences.

Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz later reiterated that Baghdad was determined to resist U.S. and British overflights of the no-fly zones in the north and south "by all means."

Meanwhile, Russia and France are to protest U.S. air

strikes in Iraq that damaged oil pipeline facilities, prompting a halt in U.N.-supervised Iraqi exports, Western diplomats said Wednesday.

The diplomats said that the two countries would request a briefing from the U.N. official in charge of implementing a humanitarian programme on the impact of the strikes, during a closed-door U.N. Security Council session on Wednesday.

The spokesman for the oil-for-food programme, John Mills, told AFP that Benon Sevan would "give the council an update on latest information" from the sites in northern Iraq located inside a U.S. and British patrolled "no-fly" zone.

In London, British Prime Minister Tony Blair said the air strikes which cut Iraq's oil pipeline to Turkey were carried out by mistake.

"It certainly was not by purpose, and we don't even know yet what the extent of the damage clearly is," Blair told the House of Commons.

Blair reminded MPs of U.S. and British reasons for the strikes. "In Iraq it is necessary to protect both the Kurdish people and the Shia Muslims

from the brutality of [Iraqi President] Saddam Hussein," said the prime minister. "If he wants to stop those patrols then he can cut back into line with the U.N. resolutions, stop butchering those people for whom he has responsibility and start behaving like a responsible leader in the world."

But Blair's contention that the pipeline strikes were by mistake appeared to contradict statements in Washington. There, Pentagon officials said Iraqi facilities with dual military and civilian uses were now subject to attack if they posed a threat to U.S. and British pilots.

"If Saddam Hussein chooses to link his commercial enterprises with his military enterprises, that's his problem," said one Pentagon official. The relay station "may have had a dual use function. In fact, looking at it, it probably did," the official said.

U.S. jets on Sunday and Monday carried out a series of bombing raids which hit communication centres along the Iraqi-Turkish pipeline that transports more than half of all Iraq's U.N.-authorised crude exports.

The U.N. spokesman in Baghdad, George Somerville, on Wednesday told AFP the oil exports were still halted, costing Baghdad some \$10 million a day, based on a price of \$8 a barrel.

The strikes were the heaviest since the Desert Fox assault launched by Washington and London in mid-December, the U.S. military said. Baghdad said at least four people were killed in northern Iraq on Sunday and Monday.

U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen acknowledged that the raids could have been to blame for the halt of oil exports but insisted that an Iraqi communications facility was targeted on Sunday.

U.S. pilots have now been given "greater flexibility to attack those systems which put them in jeopardy," he announced.

The oil-for-food programme coordinator, Sevan, said he was "deeply concerned" by the developments.

Sevan warned that "any extended stoppage will aggravate further the lack of funding available for humanitarian supplies under the oil for food programme."

U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan on Tuesday evaded questions on the escalation of U.S. and British air strikes on Iraq, referring them to the Security Council.

"I think it is very much an issue for the council, which is fully seized of that dossier, rather than for the secretary general," he told journalists.

Russia called for an immediate halt to the U.S.-led air strikes in Iraq. "The bombing must end immediately," chief Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Vladimir

Rakhmanin said. The air strikes "cannot be justified from a legal or a moral point of view and hinder the settlement of the Iraqi problem, which is being sought by the U.N. Security Council," said Rakhmanin.

France, a fellow Security Council permanent member, also criticised the U.S. and British air strikes and expressed concern at their effect on the people of Iraq.

Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Anne Gazeau Secret said: "It is clear that the repeated military operations are not leading in the direction we want."

PNA promises trials for prisoners

NABLUS (AP) — Islamist militants who launched a 36-day hunger strike to protest detention without trial said Wednesday that Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's government promised to give them their day in court or freedom.

Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, spiritual leader of the largest militant group Hamas, denied reports that the group agreed to halt attacks during Israel's election campaign as part of the deal ending the divisive strike.

Details emerged Wednesday of the agreement between the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and Hamas to settle the hunger strike by 400 prisoners which ended earlier this week.

Gen. Mohammad Jabareen, warden of the Jolod prison where 70 of the militants belonging to Hamas and the Iran-backed Islamist Jihad are being held, said those who are released will sign an agreement not to commit acts of violence.

Jamal Mansour, 39, a leading figure in Hamas who acted as spokesman for the prisoners, said he expected the understand-

ing to be implemented soon although there was no specific timetable.

Mansour, who appeared gaunt and weak after the strike in which prisoners drank only milk and water, said the agreement would mean less use of detention without trial and would prevent Israel from pressuring the PNA into making arrests sweeps.

"I think that the resolution will create a situation in which the Palestinian (National) Authority won't be able to arrest people for their political affiliation," he said.

Mansour, who was rounded up following the September 1997 suicide bombing in Jerusalem's Mahane Yehuda open-air market which resulted in 18 deaths, said there was no concrete evidence against him.

A reporter and photographer were allowed into the sprawling prison Wednesday guarded by watch towers and police patrols. Authorities tried to prevent them from speaking with prisoners other than the spokesman.

The PNA has been criticised by human rights groups such as

Amnesty International for its treatment of prisoners.

Palestinian officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said part of the understanding with Hamas was a halt in suicide bombings and other attacks until Israel's May 17 election. They suggested a period of quiet was also designed to help Arafat garner support for a declaration of statehood.

Yassin, the founder of Hamas, said the agreement on ending the strike was limited to guaranteeing the prisoners a trial or freedom. "I have no information regarding any agreement that encompasses more than that," he said.

An Israeli government which made peace with the Palestinians lost reelection in 1996 after a spate of deadly suicide bombings claimed by Hamas. Benjamin Netanyahu, a hard-liner who promised "peace with security" was elected in its place.

Yassin said Hamas had no interest in the outcome of the Israeli election calling the left and the right were the same.

British MP urges action to monitor killer asteroids

LONDON (R) — A British member of parliament on Wednesday launched a campaign for the global monitoring of massive asteroids which could kill billions of people if they crashed into the earth.

"At present an asteroid could hit the earth and we would have about 20 seconds' notice," Lembit Opik told a news conference. "It isn't long enough to say the Lord's Prayer."

Opik is a member of the minority Liberal Democrats whose Lithuanian grandfather, an astronomer, had an asteroid named after him.

Opik was due to initiate a debate in parliament later on Wednesday in which he planned to urge the government to take a lead by setting up an asteroid-tracking telescope, based in either Namibia or Australia.

Scientists believe six such dedicated telescopes are needed around the globe to identify and

track the 2,000 or so "near-earth" asteroids, minor planets measuring more than a kilometre across.

They say this could enable them to predict a collision with the earth some 20-30 years before it occurred, giving enough time for humanity to launch a nuclear bomb or another device into space to intercept the asteroid and deflect its course.

Astronomer Mark Bailey, director of Northern Ireland's Armagh observatory, said a large asteroid hitting the earth would cause disaster on a scale comparable with the one which scientists believe wiped out the dinosaurs 60 million years ago.

"It doesn't matter where on earth it hit. The dust thrown into the atmosphere would cool the earth drastically and cause a temporary shutdown of agriculture," he said. "It could mean the loss of about a quarter of the world's population."

He said scientists had only discovered the existence of large near-earth asteroids — those which orbit relatively close to the earth instead of in the asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter — in the last few years.

A globally-threatening impact with one is likely to occur only once in 100,000 years. But the risk of any given citizen of the U.S. dying because of an asteroid impact has been estimated at 20,000 to one, Bailey said.

Jonathan Tate, director of the pressure group Space Guard U.K., said setting up the proposed telescope, thus encouraging other developed countries to take similar steps, would cost just 9.45 million pounds (\$15.29 million) over 10 years.

"It is only sense to do something about this. If the Americans could get to the moon in 10 years, we can solve this problem in less than 10 years."

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